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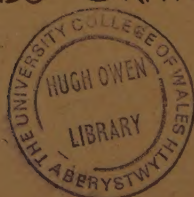
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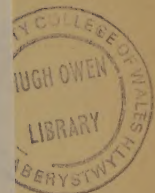
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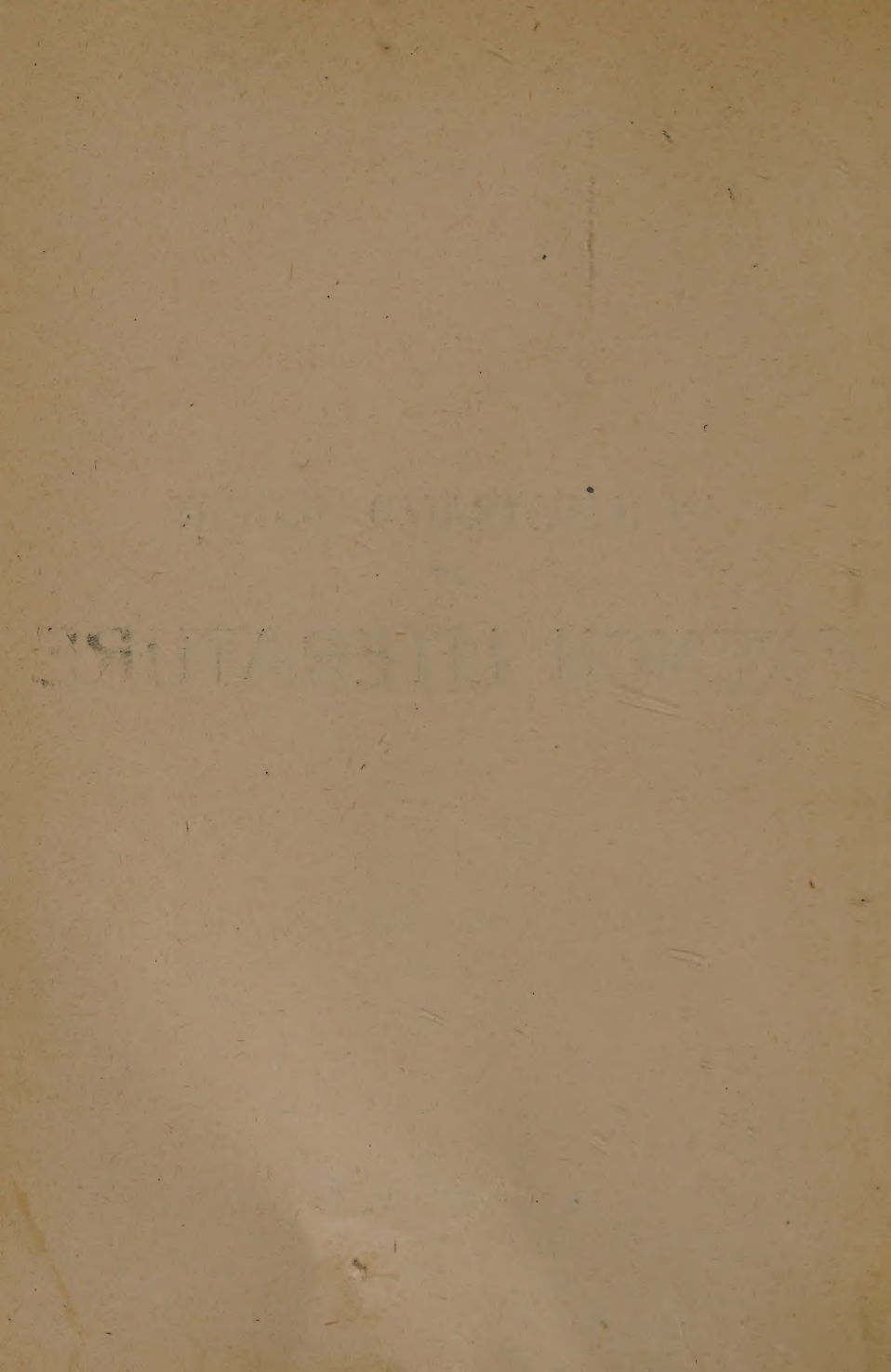
AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY  
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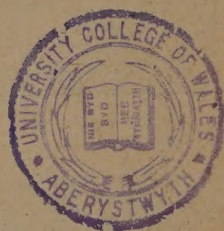
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POET'S INSPIRATION  
by Nicolas Poussin



4  
AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY  
OF  
FRENCH LITERATURE

BY  
Ch.-M. DES GRANGES

PROFESSEUR DE PREMIÈRE AU LYCÉE CHARLEMAGNE  
DOCTEUR ÈS LETTRES

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Translated from the French

BY  
Louise MORGAN SILL



PARIS  
LIBRAIRIE HATIER  
8, Rue d'Assas, 8

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1921

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

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*L'Histoire de la Littérature française*, of which we publish to-day the English translation, appeared for the first time in its original form in December, 1910. New editions followed each other rapidly, and the present translation is based on the 20th French edition (1920).

The success of the book with the great intellectual public of professors and students is due to the method that the author has adopted.

Modern literary criticism is guided by two principles: historical instinct and accuracy of detail. There is a greater and greater tendency to put back literary productions into the social, political and artistic surroundings among which they came to birth. We no longer isolate them as independent masterpieces. We explain them by historical events, by biography and by their connection with the general movement of ideas and facts. In a History of Literature, we all seek to find, not superficial judgments pronounced in an oratorical style, but criticism founded on a study of documents and the manners and customs of the time.

This book is distinguished from similar works by the following characteristics:

- 1) Each literary epoch is introduced by a general picture of the social, moral, artistic and scientific conditions of the day, so that we have the stage set on which the great writers lived and reflected. A short summary of contemporary foreign literature is

*adjoined, in order that the influence exercised on France in different epochs may be duly appreciated ;*

*2) The biographies of the principal authors are traced, so that the reader may see at what date and under what circumstances each of their works appeared ;*

*3) A short and precise analysis of the chief works of all the great writers is given ;*

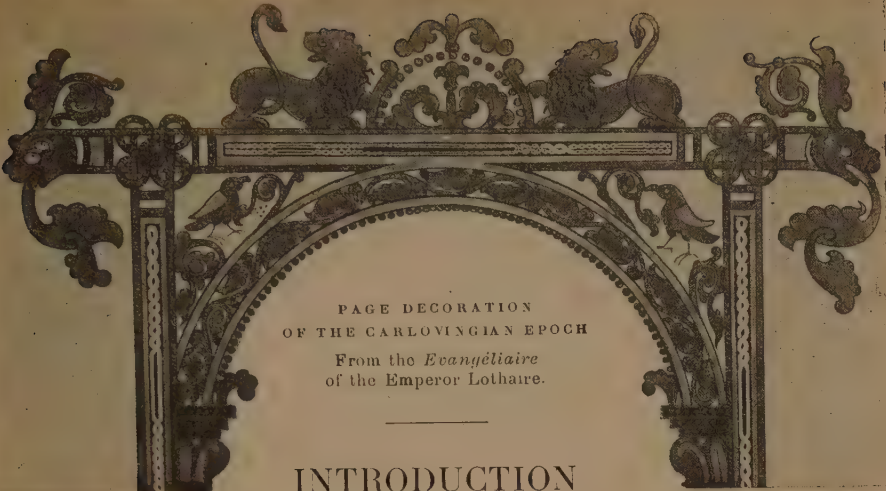
*4) Each chapter is followed by a list of authorities intended to guide the reader in the choice of the best texts and to enable him to study more profoundly any particular point of literary history or criticism that may interest him personally ;*

*5) At the end of the volume, a general table is given, which co-ordinates all the literary production of the epochs, their poetry, drama, etc.*

*6) References to the two collections of Morceaux choisis published by the same author and the same editor, make it easy for the reader to supplement and verify by examples the author's appreciations of the principal writers.*

*We may add that the style of this history of literature has none of the aridity of certain learned works ; its fundamental accuracy detracts in no way from the grace and variety of its form.*

*It is then a valuable aid to study that we place to-day at the disposal of English students, and a book as instructive as it is charming for all those who, in countries where English is spoken, take an interest in the long and richly diversified evolution of French littérature.*



PAGE DECORATION  
OF THE CARLOVINGIAN EPOCH

From the *Évangélaire*  
of the Emperor Lothaire.

## INTRODUCTION

# Sources of the French Language.

## EARLIEST TEXTS



### I. — SOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT.

**he Celtic Language.** — In the greater part of the territory occupied by the Gauls, which corresponds approximately to present France, different Celtic dialects were spoken. These dialects are represented to-day only by the Breton and Gaelic idioms of Brittany and Wales, which are derived from them. The Gallic tongue, properly speaking, as it was spoken at the time of the Roman conquest, cannot be reconstructed: a few inscriptions, a few geographical names (*Eure, Isère, Durance, Brives, Condé, Verdun, Rouen*, etc.), certain words (*arpent*,



*alouette, banne, bec, lieue, marne, sac*, etc.), do not enable us to imagine the Gallic vocabulary as a whole, nor the true spirit of its syntax. One fact is certain, that the French language is not derived from the Gallic but from the Latin tongue.

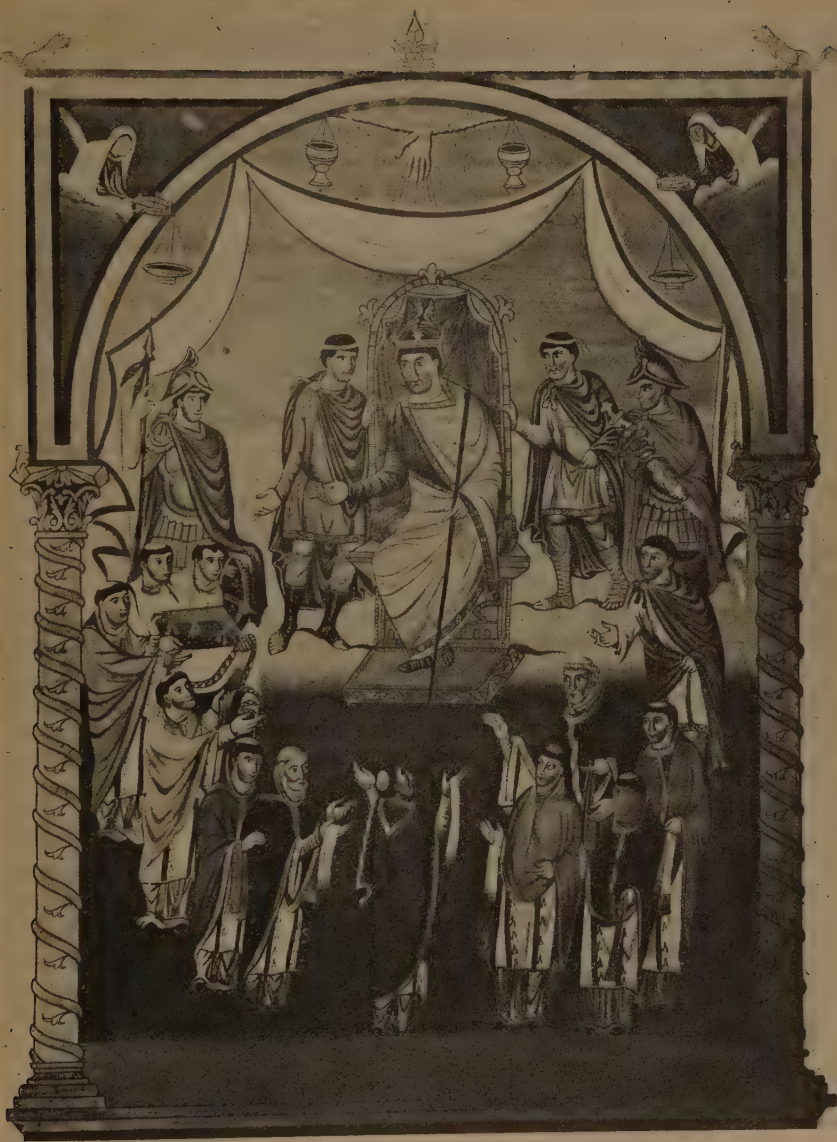
**The Roman Conquest.** — In the second century B. C., the Romans, already masters of Spain, took possession of all the southern region of Gaul now known as Provence (*provincia romana*). Latin culture flourished at Marseilles, Aix, Nîmes, Narbonne and as far north as Lyons. The powerful colonial organization of the Romans, the creation of schools, the privileges accorded to those who spoke their language, the obligation of the conquered people to use it in all public affairs, soon resulted in the predominance of Latin. After the conquests of Cæsar the same influences spread over the whole of Gaul.

If the Gallic language had been preserved in literary works, this diffusion of Latin would not have been so prompt or so decisive. But the principle of natural selection operates in languages as in living beings or the cells of an organism; and Latin was to predominate over the Gallic tongue as, six centuries later, it was to resist the Germanic languages. It was, then, not so much imposed by the victors, as it was victorious in itself, as the German conquerors learned in their turn.

**Classical and Popular Latin.** — The Latin language was spread throughout Gaul under two forms. In the schools, in the cultured and governing classes of society, the Latin of Cicero and Cæsar was learned and spoken, but among the middle and lower classes the Latin of current conversation and of the soldiers was in use. Even at Rome there was a wide difference between these two kinds of Latin, especially in pronunciation and syntax. Latin words which we find in classical texts were abridged or altered by the popular pronunciation. The classics themselves admit by the side of forms such as *sæculum*, *vinculum*, abridged forms such as *sæclum*, *vinclum*...

The accented syllables were strongly emphasized, while the unaccented were lurred over and tended to disappear. In syntax, conversational Latin made use of many more prepositions than literary Latin, and these were substituted for inflectional endings to indicate certain relations. Auxiliary verbs were used more frequently in oral Latin.

**Popular Formation.** — This conversational and popular Latin was the one which spread the quickest and furthest in Gaul. Gauls of the upper classes learned classical Latin at school, and attempted to make use of it in writing and oratory, but to them it was an artificial and dead language. The other Latin, still living and in continual evolution even in Italy, was spoken among Romans



CHARLES THE BALD, SURROUNDED BY LAY LORDS RECEIVES THE GIFT OF A BIBLE

From a miniature taken from the *Bible of Saint-Denis*.

and Gauls. The Gauls tried to reproduce by pronunciation the words which they heard, but of which they heard distinctly only a part. This reproduction was spontaneous, direct, and followed unconscious but fixed laws which grammarians have reconstituted, as scientists verify the evolutionary laws of animal species or those of physical phenomena. And by this long labour was evolved, little by little, the Romance language (1), of which the first texts appeared in the eighth century.

The Barbaric invasions of the fifth century resulted in the ruin of Roman administration and Roman schools; and popular Latin, already in process of development into the Romance tongue, was definitely substituted for literary Latin even in official documents and in the Church.

**Essential Laws of the Romance Language.** — The Latin words reproduced by the Gauls, who had no knowledge of their written forms, consisted chiefly of the accented syllable. The essential rule, therefore, in the transition from the Latin to the Romance word is the persistence of the accented syllable. When a short vowel immediately precedes an accented syllable, the vowel disappears; *claritatem* becomes *clarté*; and it is certain that the Romans had already pronounced it *clartalem*. When a long vowel immediately precedes the accented syllable, this vowel is preserved in Romance: *pérégrinum* becomes *pèlerin*. In every Latin word where the accent falls on the third syllable, as in *claritatem*, the first syllable has a secondary accent which preserves it, and it is retained. Other examples: *bonitatem*, *bonté*; *liberare*, *livrer*. The vowel which follows the accented syllable disappears or is weakened in *e* mute, — whether at the end of the word, as in *mortalem*, *mortel*; *rosam*, *rose*; or before the end of the word as in *tabulam*, *table*; *mobilem*, *meuble*. Finally, the median consonant, which separates two vowels of which the second bears the stress, disappears or is modified: *dotare*, *douer*; *securum*, *sûr*; *delicatum*, *délié*; *debere*, *devoir*.

**Declension.** — Latin nouns and adjectives had declension (Cf. German language); they had six cases; nominative, vocative, genitive, dative, accusative, ablative. In Romance only two of these cases are retained: the nominative (subject), and the accusative (object). The *objective* singular and the nominative plural have no *s*. Example:

Singular, *nominative*: **murs** (*murus*).

*objective*: **mur** (*murum*).

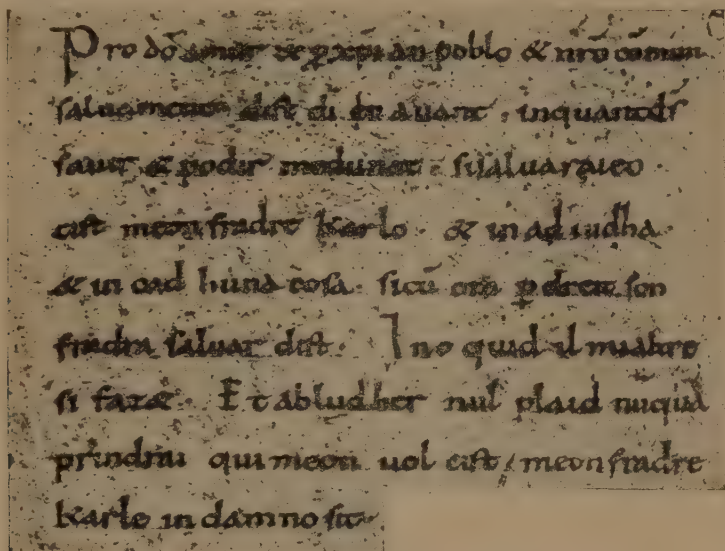
Plural, *nominative*: **mur** (*muri*).

*objective*: **murs** (*muros*).

(1) Spanish, Italian, Roumanian are all Romance languages. Popular Latin produced, in the special conditions of race and climate peculiar to each country, a Romance language distinct from its neighbour: by virtue of the law of adaptation to surroundings.



We see that the Romance *s* corresponds to the Latin *s*. So until the fourteenth century the French language discerned the function of the word in the phrase from its case, and could permit itself inversions which now are impossible. The sentence, *Le roi tua le lion*, would have the opposite meaning if we wrote, *Le lion tua le roi*. In the Middle Ages, one could write without changing the sense: *li (le) reis tua lo (le) lion*, or: *lo (le) lion tua li (le) reis*, a sentence in



THE MOST ANCIENT MEMORIAL OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

Text of the Sermon pronounced by Louis the Germanic in March, 842, at Strasbourg.

Fac simile of a page of a manuscript of Nithard's History.

which the inflectional endings, and no longer the position, indicate the subject and the object.

Cases disappeared from the French language towards the beginning of the fourteenth century. Only the form of the objective was retained for all the functions, whether subjective or objective. So it was that the *s* became from this time the distinctive mark of the plural, as the objective singular had no *s*, and the objective plural had one.

**Learned Formation. Doublets.** — In the twelfth century, certain words of scholarly formation began to appear beside words of popular origin. The

*clerics*, those who read and wrote Latin, introduced into the French vocabulary words traced, syllable by syllable, upon the Latin words, of which only the endings are French. Thus, upon the Latin *sollicitare* they formed *solliciter*. Generally, the Latin word thus traced over had already yielded a word of popular formation; and the result was that two French words were drawn from the same Latin type: these are called doublets. Examples of these are well known; thus, *gracilem* gives *grêle* and *gracile*; *fragilem*, *frêle* and *fragile*; *advocatus*, *avoué* and *avocat*; *legalem*, *loyal* and *légal*, etc. There is always a quite appreciable difference of sense between the doublets: from which we can understand the same wide difference of meaning which existed between Latin words used in ordinary language and the literary or official texts.

### Subdivisions of the Romance. Langue d'oc and langue d'oïl. Dialects.

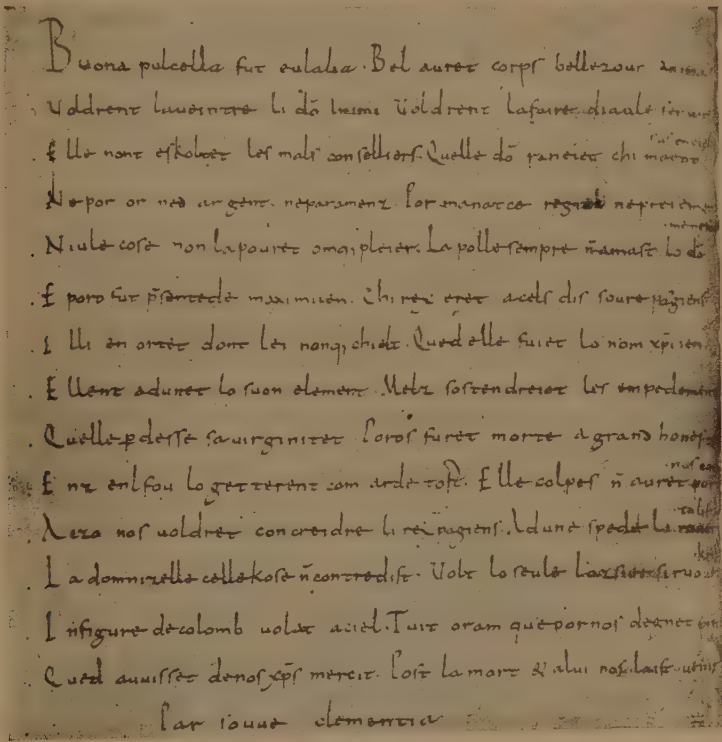
— The Romance language took a variety of forms in the extensive country of the Gauls, according to races and milieu. It subdivided itself at first into two great dialects, the *langue d'oc* and the *langue d'oïl*, thus designated by the word which in each of them signified yes (*hoc* and *hoc illi*). The *langue d'oc* was spoken in the southern, the *langue d'oïl* in the northern region. A line which would run from La Rochelle to Grenoble, passing by Limoges, Clermont-Ferrand and Lyons, would indicate *approximately* the separation of the two languages. It must be understood that this separation is entirely conventional: one passes from the *langue d'oc* to the *langue d'oïl* by the intermediate nuances of numerous local dialects.

Each of these two languages was subdivided again into dialects: in the *oc* region we have the *provençal*, the *languedocien*, the *dauphinois*, the *auvergnat*, the *limousin*; in the *oïl* region, the *picard*, the *bourguignon*, the *normand*, the *poitevin* — and above all, the dialect of *Ile-de-France*. Nearly all these dialects were represented in the Middle Ages by literary works. But from the fifteenth century, and especially from the sixteenth, the dialect of *Ile-de-France* took precedence of all the others, and became the central and preponderating language. It was not because it possessed in itself merits superior to those of the *picard* and the *normand*; but its political position as the dialect spoken at the capital and at court gave it, more rapidly than the others, a number of qualities — precision, nicety, elegance, clarity — which the other dialects, on the contrary, lost more and more; so much so, that from the seventeenth century, as they ceased to be written, and were no longer spoken by any but the less cultured classes, the *normand*, *picard*, *limousin*, etc., fell to the rank of *patois*.

## II. — EARLIEST MONUMENTS.

**The Glossaries.** — From the eighth century, the written Latin language was no longer familiar to those who spoke Romance. So little dictionaries or *glossa-*

ries were made for the use of those who wished to read Latin texts. We still possess the *Glossaire de Reichenau* (so called from the abbey where it was discovered), and which belongs to the end of the eighth century. In this we find Latin words from the *Vulgate* (the Latin translation of the Bible by Saint Jerome),



Buona pulcolla fut eulalia. Bel aures corps bellezour  
 Uddrent lueine li de lueine Uoldrent lafure diable  
 E lle nont effolue les malz conseilz. Quelle de rancie chi morte  
 Ne por or nes argente ne parmentz. Lor manace regre ne prent  
 Nuls cose non la poutz omplir. La polle rompre n'est li de  
 E poro fut pientee maxime. Chi ne est acie dir soure pignie  
 E li en oite dont les nong chie. Quel elle fuit le nom xpi  
 E lle ne adure le son element. Mote fortendret le empredent  
 Quelle pisse sa virginite. Lors fure morte a grand honie  
 E ne en fou le getterent com arde toie. E lle colpe n'aurte por  
 Neza ne uoldret concroire li rei pignie. Adunc pout le  
 La demirelle collekore n'contradist. Vole le reule la xpi  
 L'infigne de colom volte acie. Tuit oram que pornois de  
 Quel auisset donos xpi merie. Coie la mort d'elui ne laist  
 Par soue clomente

TEXT OF THE CANTILENA OF SAINT EULALIA

Fac simile of a manuscript of the X century.

with the corresponding *Romance* word. It is a very interesting document from which to learn the origin of the French language. Another *Glossary*, that of Cassel, contains (Teutonic) words with their equivalents in *Romance*.

**The Strasbourg Oaths.** — In the month of March, 842, Charles the Bald and Louis the Germanic allied themselves against their brother Lothaire, and their soldiers took a solemn oath. The soldiers of Charles used the *Teutonic* lan-



guage, in order to make themselves understood by the Germans; those of Louis used *Romance*. The text of these oaths, the first *official* monument of the two languages, has been preserved for us by the historian Nithard, intimate counsellor of Charles the Bald.

The following is the *Romance* text, and its translation in modern French :

OATH OF LOUIS THE GERMANIC IN THE ROMANCE LANGUAGE.

« Pro Deo amur, et pro Christian poblo et nostro commun salvament, d'ist di in avant, in quant Deus savir et podir me dunat, si salvarai eo cist meon fradre Karlo, et in adjudha et in cadhuna cosa, si cum om per dreit son fradra salvar dift, in o quid il mi altresi fazet, et ab Ludher nul plaïd nunquam prin-drai qui, meon vol, cist meon fradre Karle in damno sit. »

*French Translation.*

« Pour l'amour de Dieu, et pour le commun salut du peuple chrétien et le nôtre, dorénavant (*de ista die in avant*) autant que Dieu m'en donne savoir et pouvoir, je défendrai (*eo pour ego*), mon frère Karle que voilà (*cist*, du latin *ecce istum*), et par aide (*adjudha*, du latin *adjutare*), et en chaque (*cadhuna*, du latin *quot una*) chose ainsi qu'on doit (*dift*, *debet*) par devoir (*per dreit*) défendre son frère, à la condition qu'il (en ce que, *in o quid*, *o pour hoc*), me fasse de même (*altresi*, de *alterum sic*, la pareille), et avec Lothaire je ne prendrai jamais aucun arrangement qui, par ma volonté, soit au préjudice de mon frère Karle que voilà (1). »

On the other hand, we have seen that the soldiers of Charles the Bald took their oath in the Teutonic language, and this text is the first monument of the German tongue.

**Texts of the Xth and XIth Centuries.** — Of the tenth century, we have preserved the *Cantilène de sainte Eulalie* (discovered at Valenciennes in 1837) in 25 assonant verses; and the *Vie de saint Léger*, in 240 assonant verses.

Of the eleventh century, the *Vie de saint Alexis* in 265 assonant verses.

This text is particularly interesting, first, because we possess, by the side of the eleventh century original, the rehandled versions of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; we can follow, from one MS. to the next, the changes and interpolations of the editors, and verify the superiority of the oldest edition. Furthermore, the *Vie de saint Alexis* shows a genuine narrative talent, and proves that this eleventh century author already possessed some of the essential qualities of the best French literature. If we had the authentic text

(1) Translation taken from AUBERTIN'S *Origines et formation de la langue et de la métrique françaises*. Belin.

of some *Chanson de geste* which has come down to us altered and ruined, we might perhaps find that it possessed as much clarity and sober strength as the *Vie de saint Alexis*.

This legend is in itself interesting. Alexis, son of the Roman Count Euphémien, marries a rich young girl of noble blood. He leaves her on their wedding day and takes refuge in Syria, where he conceals himself in the company of beggars. He returns to Rome and goes to the home of his parents, where his young wife has remained. They give him permission to live in an obscure corner under a stairway. There he stays seventeen years, at the mercy of the insults of the servants. At length he dies, and it is then only that he is recognized by his family. The whole city of Rome acclaims the new saint, who is buried with the greatest pomp in Saint-Boniface's Church.

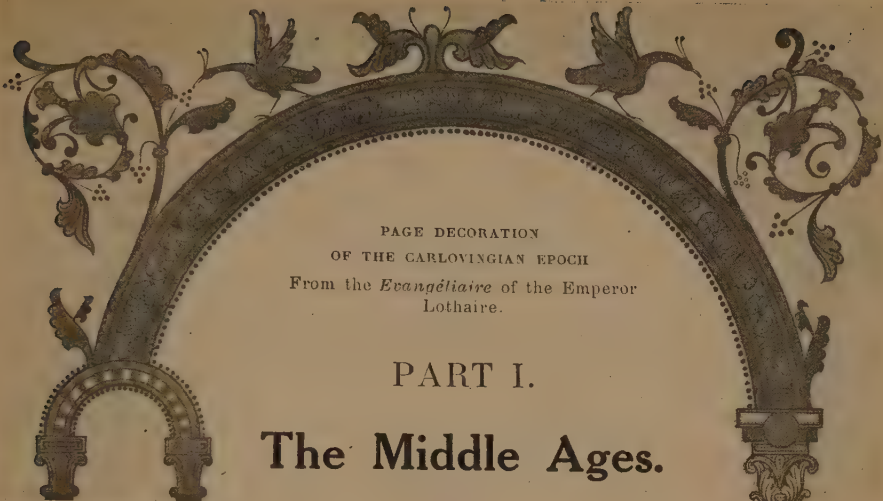
We have also preserved a few other *Lives of Saints*, of less value, but giving curious details of contemporary morals and customs. From these we pass to the collections of pious tales, such as the *Miracles of Gautier de Coinci* (XIII century). But the finest works of great epic poetry were already being produced, and the *Vie de saint Alexis* is the link between the earliest texts, properly speaking and the *Chansons de geste*.



ORNAMENT TAKEN FROM THE CARLOVINGIAN MANUSCRIPT  
Called the *Bible of Saint-Denis*







PAGE DECORATION  
OF THE CARLOVINGIAN EPOCH  
From the *Evangélaire* of the Emperor  
Lothaire.

PART I.  
**The Middle Ages.**

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CHAPTER I.

**GENERAL SURVEY OF THE MIDDLE AGES.**

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SUMMARY

1. **THE MIDDLE AGES** include the period between 842 (**The Strasbourg Oaths**), and 1515 (**accession of François I.**); but the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries must be regarded as **transitional**.

2. **MEDIÆVAL LITERATURE** was addressed to **hearers** rather than **readers**; we possess hardly any original texts, except of the **Chronicles**, but only **rehandled versions**; — necessity of replacing them in their **historic period** and **social milieu**; — they already show all the qualities of **French genius**.

3. **THE SOCIAL CLASSES**: How the writers represent them, and their influence upon writers; — the **clergy**, the **aristocracy**, the **middle classes**, and the **proletariat**.

4. **EDUCATION**: The primary, secondary and higher schools; — the colleges, the **Sorbonne**, the **universities**; the **programmes**. — The **manuscripts**.

5. **ARTS AND SCIENCES**: Architecture the **leading art**: the **Roman**, the **Gothic**. — The **scientific movement**, slow but **genuine**.

6. **FOREIGN INFLUENCES** modify or enrich **French genius**: the **Arabs**, the **Norman conquest of England**, the **Crusades**, the **South**, the **Hundred Years' War**, foreign literatures.

## I. — MAIN DIVISIONS OF THE MIDDLE AGES.



DECOR-  
ATED  
LETTER  
taken  
from  
a manu-  
script  
of the  
VIII  
century

IN the history of French literature, the *Middle Ages* are designated as the long period extending from 842 (*Strasbourg Oaths*) to about 1515 (accession of François I); and even this date must be brought down to 1548 with regard to the drama (prohibition of *Mysteries* by Parliament). This designation of a period of more than six centuries of our literary history is hallowed by tradition, but is none the less very disputable. A few scholars, among them Gaston Paris, have proposed to reserve the name Middle Ages for the ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries, from 842 to 1328 (accession of the Valois), and to group separately the fourteenth, fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth centuries, which would thus form a sort of *Pré-Renaissance* (1). For this Gaston Paris gives excellent reasons (2).

a) Indeed, from the beginning of the fourteenth century, the French language, as we have already seen, underwent an important organic change: it dropped its cases, and by so doing transformed its syntax, that is to say, the order in which thoughts were expressed; it became altogether analytical, and why? Because French genius was emerging at last from its long fumbling, and definitely displaying its national qualities of *clarity* and *logic*.

b) The different branches of composition were modified: « On one hand, narrative poetry was no longer written; on the other, lyric poetry assumed entirely new forms; the drama prepared for its great expansion in the fifteenth century; a presentment of history, hitherto unknown, appeared with Jean le Bel and Froissart (3)... »

However, it is not altogether convenient to separate the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries from the Middle Ages properly so called. Though in the fourteenth century a new era really began for the language, the case with regard to the different branches of literature is more doubtful.

a) Drama, which would appear to furnish the most positive argument, must be connected, in serious works, with the *Mystère d'Adam* (XII century), the *Miracles de Notre-Dame* (XIII and XIV centuries), the *Jeu de saint Nicolas* of J. Bodel (XIII century), and, in humorous works, with the writings of Adam de la Halle (XIII century), and, as we shall tell in its proper place, with a repertory now totally vanished but the former existence of which is certain.

b) As to lyric poetry, the difference between a Rutebeuf (XIII century) and a

(1) Most of the *Manuals* published in Germany have adopted these divisions.

(2) See Preface of his *Histoire de la littérature au moyen âge*, 2nd edition, 1890.

(3) GASTON PARIS, *Histoire de la littérature au moyen âge*, p. 111.



A CASTLE AT THE END OF THE XIV CENTURY

*From a miniature by Pol de Limbourg, painted in the Très Riches  
Heures of the Duke de Berry.*

The Louvre in the time of Charles V, seen from the orchards of the Hotel de Nesle, on the site of  
which the French Institute now stands.

Villon (end of the XV century) is only the difference between talent and genius.

c) Add to this that neither the spirit of the Middle Ages, nor their beliefs nor methods of teaching, nor morals had essentially changed: for such a change we have to await the first years of the sixteenth century.

So the two opinions can be maintained. We have therefore thought it best, in order to facilitate the use of the present volume, to divide the period by the different literary genres from 842 to 1515, and to 1548 for the drama.

## II. — PRINCIPLES TO BE OBSERVED IN THE STUDY OF MEDIÆVAL LITERARY WORKS.

But precisely because each branch of literature is presented in its entire development, from the first texts to the sixteenth century, the reader must be warned that the *historic* sense should underlie all his appreciations; and he must be informed, from the beginning, of a few principles of criticism altogether special to the study of the Middle Ages. These may be summed up as follows:

1. Generally speaking, *this literature is not addressed to readers but to auditors*. From this fact result certain external characteristics which shock us: the misuse of the same *formulas of transition*, the use of stereotyped phraseology designed to evoke certain conventional personages or tableaux, of carelessness and empty *prolixity*, of *symmetrical* arrangements and *refrains*, etc. As the people did not read the text, and *would never read it* (which is not true of the drama in our time), these defects were unobserved, and were necessary.

2. Until the fifteenth century, and above all in poetry, scarcely any work — with the exception of *Memoirs* and certain *Chronicles* — is *original* as we understand the meaning of the word to-day, nor can be considered as exactly representing in its time contemporary manners and sentiments. Every subject, epic, lyric, satiric, dramatic, is not only used successively by generation after generation (which has been done in all literatures and in all centuries), but is like a building continually reconstructed of which the most ancient parts have been preserved, in which various styles are juxtaposed, and the date inscribed by the last architect really represents nothing more than a pediment, a roof, or a plaster cast. For example the *Chanson de Roland* in its eleventh century form contains fragments of one or several previous versions which mingle incongruously with the more recent parts. What would be such incongruities in a *Chanson* of which the recovered text belongs to the thirteenth century! The same is true of the different parts of the *Roman de Renart*, of nearly all the *fabliaux* and most of the *farces*. In all this satirical literature there is a foundation of traditional jests, sometimes traceable to the Gallo-Romans and to the Orientals, and alluding to forgotten abuses; to these are added a criticism of actual





A ROYAL BANQUET IN THE XIV CENTURY

*From a miniature in the Grandes Chroniques de France.*

King Charles V is seated at the centre of the table, on his right the Emperor Charles IV, and on his left, the King of the Romans. The "interlude", which the King offered as a spectacle to his hosts, represented the taking of Jerusalem by Godfrey of Bouillon. In the ship, on the left, stands Peter the Hermit.

abuses; all is mingled; the personages are newly dressed; and the audience laughs all the more if the jests have become paradoxical. Let us laugh as they did, but we must not seek the morals and customs of the clergy or the middle classes in the *fabliaux*.

3. Finally, it is always necessary, in order to understand a work of the Middle Ages, a task always so difficult to accomplish, to endeavour to replace it:

a) In the historic period to which the version which we possess belongs: *before the Crusades* (XI century), *after the Crusades* (XII and XIII centuries), in the thirteenth century — the most brilliant by reason of its kings, its universities, its arts, and which can be considered the first of our great literary and philosophical centuries — in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Hundred Years' War, destitution and revolt, religious quarrels), end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth (Louis XI., the invention of printing, the discovery of America, the first Italian wars).

b) In the *social milieu* where it originated, or for which it was written: secular clergy, feudal chivalry, court chivalry; magistracy, Parisian or provincial middle classes, lawyers' clerks, students, the proletariat of the city or country. Thus, account would be taken of all the elements which elucidate the spirit and significance of a work, because in the Middle Ages there was not a *public*, there were several, and each one had its own literature.

4. But despite the profound difference which separates mediæval literature from that of the Renaissance and from the classical ages, we nevertheless find in the first a few of the essential characteristics of the second.

a) Mediæval works, whether epics, romances or satires, etc., were composed and written for *society*; they address a *public*, treat of general ideas, of common sentiments, of probable situations; they have a moral purpose, patriotic, religious or political; and they create universal rather than special types.

b) Furthermore, though these works lack *composition*, in the classical sense of the word, or rather *proportion*, they are thoroughly French in their management of the plot, in their well-defined characterization of the personages, and finally, by a clear and facile diction, too diffuse doubtless, but full of variety, and which, from the sober and rough beauty of the Roland to the piquant playfulness of Pathelin, from the nonchalant charm of Joinville to the eloquent seriousness of Communes, had already proved its value.

When we remember that these *trouvères*, poets, narrators, had to create everything, that they drew their *tableaux*, their plots and dramas direct from life, that they were compelled to find for each kind of literature its adequate form and language and rhythm, we are less shocked by their naïveté and clumsiness than astonished by their genius. They alone in Europe were able to produce such works, and to France belongs the glory of having created European literature.

### III. — THE SOCIAL CLASSES.

What was the condition in the Middle Ages of those social classes which furnished to literature its models, its audiences and later its readers? We only have to concern ourselves with the period between the eleventh and the end of the fifteenth centuries, from the *Chanson de Roland* to Villon.



A KNIGHTING CEREMONY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE XIV CENTURY

*From a miniature in a manuscript of the Roman de Troie.*

The "varlet" who is armed as a knight is Pyrrhus, son of Achille.

1. **The Church and the Clergy.** — Clerical scholars wrote and read little else but Latin, and ecclesiastic literature does not lie in the domain of the present volume. But in all the literary genres we find the collaboration of clerics; and the more profoundly we study the origin and development, not only of didactic, learned, allegorical poetry, but of epics and plays the more evident is their influence.

The influence of the church upon society was also powerful, for the mind of the public is always either inspired by it or in reaction against it. The political role of the popes and clergy matters little in this connection. But what we must endeavour to understand and estimate is the direct influence of the clergy and the monastic orders upon French society.

During the barbaric period of the Middle Ages the clergy alone had represent-

ed moral authority, and the convents were respected asylums where both traditions and texts were preserved. The knights made war, the middle classes devoted themselves to their material interests, and the people were illiterate.

The *secular* clergy, bishops, priests, etc., were in daily contact with their people much more than they are now. Social life moved, so to speak, to the rhythm of religion. Every action of daily life, from birth to death, was noted by it. By its churches, where the rich and poor were equal under the eye of God, where the priest's discourse announced future justice, where artistic enchantment was mingled with the charm of mystery; by numerous and splendid *fêtes*, processions, solemn ceremonies, dramatic representations, the clergy had many means of holding and delighting the faithful.

On their side also, the monks, the *regular* clergy, influenced society by their missions, their preaching, their work in agriculture, architecture, painting, teaching, scholarship. There were all kinds of monks, from the Benedictine who deciphered and copied MSS., to the Trappist who cultivated the soil; from the Dominican who preached the crusade against the Albigenses, to the Franciscan friar who went from door to door to beg for his convent.

In what manner does narrative and satirical poetry represent the clergy? In general, the *chansons de geste* speak with reverence of the pope, the bishops, the monks and the clerics, since they assign to them such roles as are played amidst tragic and solemn circumstances, especially death. However, even the epic poets inveigh against the clerics and their love of money, in which they showed themselves courtiers of the kings and lords who lusted after the riches of the clergy. Jests concerning the monks are also found in *Le Moniage Guillaume* and *Le Moniage Rainouart*.

But, as we may readily surmise, it was above all in the literature of the middle classes, narrative or dramatic, that most of the satire against the clergy and monks appeared (*Roman de Renart*, *Roman de la Rose*, *fabliaux*, *farces*). Public opinion treated severely their short-comings, for two reasons: first, at this epoch of faith there was a very exalted idea of the priest and the monk, and the least lapse caused indignation; second, the gallic causticity of the lower classes revenged itself in this way against those who thought themselves able to practice the most difficult virtues.

It seems singular that the clergy, at that time so powerful, should have tolerated, even in the *fêtes* organized by themselves, these satires whose violence scandalizes us to-day. The clergy exercised a strict censureship upon dogma, but they tolerated everything directed against themselves. Many different explanations have been given, none being entirely satisfactory. Was it because ecclesiastic authority felt itself so strong that for policy's sake it permitted these pin-pricks, as Mazarin permitted the songs? Or should we see in this situation a trace of the rivalry between the *secular* and the *regular* clergy?

However this may be, it was not until the middle of the sixteenth century,





THE MANSION BELONGING TO A GREAT NOBLEMAN AT THE END OF THE XIV CENTURY

*From a miniature in the Lamentations of Pierre Salmon.*

The picture represents the Hôtel des Tournelles, in the Marais, where Charles VI lived. Pierre Salmon is offering his book to the King in the presence of the Duke de Bourgogne, recognisable by his high white hat, also the Duke de Berry, who is opposite Philip le Hardi. By a convention then permitted, the artist has represented one of the sides of the great hall as being open.

after Rabelais, that the Church began to see danger in these satires, and that she realized that, as the same arguments were expressed by protestants, she would do better not to allow so much license.

2. **The Aristocracy.** — When we speak of the mediæval knight, we simplify too much a type which was a product of evolution. Literature presents two types of the knight: the *feudal*, of the *Chanson de Roland*, of *Raoul de Cambrai*, etc., whose psychology can only be explained by the relations between vassal and suzerain, and the courtly knight who, in the thirteenth century, under the influence of the Provençal and Breton literatures, obeyed a particular code of honour and love, such as Lancelot and Tristan. These two types correspond to actual transformation of social life between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. But the second type is more conventional, or at least is incomplete: the religious sentiment, always so powerful according to the testimony of chroniclers like Joinville, is totally lacking, as if it would have been inconsistent with the Celtic or Oriental marvellous necessary to the romantic action. Or, where this religious sentiment does exist, as in *Perceval*, *La Quête du Saint-Graal*, etc., it is carried to an extreme degree of mysticism and moves amidst strange legends.

In comparison with the type depicted by the poets, the real knight, whose actual exploits were related by the chroniclers, does not appear any less heroic. The companions of Villehardouin in the extraordinary but actual expedition of Constantinople, those of Saint Louis in his first crusade, and those whose follies and merits fascinated Froissart, authenticate in a way the exploits of the romances.

It is evident that such knights furnished the poets with the most brilliant epic subjects. Their indomitable individualism, proved in the disasters as well as the victories of French history, shows them always heroes. Poetry may sing them vanquished, their glory is sometimes only the greater. The two most beautiful *chansons de geste*, *Roland* and *Aliscans*, are concerned with defeats; and Froissart still extols French chivalry when he tells the story of Cressy or Poitiers.

What is lacking in mediæval poetry as well as prose (with a few rare exceptions), is the depiction of the feudal or chivalric knight in his daily life, in his relation with his family and his humble vassals. He is always shown in action, on the field of battle or on the highways, wielding his sword for God and his king, or in quest of adventures which will win for him the love of his lady. Nevertheless, it is untrue to say that "nothing human palpitates under this good armour," for both in the poets and the chroniclers we find a psychological abstract of the knight. We know, by the speeches and sometimes by short analyses, the *motives of the acts* of a Roland, a Raoul de Cambrai, a Garin, etc. As to the amorous and chivalric knights, the skill with which the author of the *Tristan* or of the *Chevalier au Lion* penetrates and describes their emotions is frequently subtle.

So much for the knight considered as a literary type. If now we consider the influence exerted by the aristocracy as patrons of the poets and chroniclers, we remark two things:

a) The *trouvere*, writing for an aristocratic audience, whose curiosity he wishes to pique, whose vanity to flatter, is led to exaggerate and overdo. However, he is obliged to preserve a certain degree of exactitude in details. War-



SCENES FROM STUDENT LIFE IN THE XV CENTURY

From a miniature in a manuscript of the *Miracles de Notre-Dame*.

riors allow an exaggeration of their bodily force, the resistance of their armour, or the murderous effect of their swords; but the poet must know how to ascribe to them actions, gestures and words in which they can recognize themselves. These *realistic* details are necessary to enable their imagination to transport them to a battle-field in the midst of the fight; and, little by little, as the illusion grows and is crystallized, they become capable of marvellous and improbable actions.

b) It was in the feudal strongholds of the tenth, eleventh and twelfth cent-



uries that these warlike fragments were recited. From the end of the twelfth century polite society began to be organized in several centers. In the south, in Provence and Gascony social reunions began to be held, ruled by elegant etiquette and presided over by a woman. We see Marie de Champagne, daughter of Aliénor de Guienne, encouraging the gallant poetry of a *Chrétien de Troyes*. From that time, both in the original works of the thirteenth century and in the prose rehandlings of the previous *chansons*, we find a new conception of social *conventions* in their tone and style, and a variety of episodes designed to interest women, who might become tired of the recitals exclusively devoted to warlike subjects. Hence the end of the *chanson de geste* and the triumph of the romance.

**3. The Middle and Lower Classes.** — It is a singular error to consider the bourgeois of the Middle Ages, or even the peasant, as a passive being, happy though beaten. From the eleventh century, favoured by the king and the lesser clergy, the people commenced to obtain serious guarantees by the organization of chartered communes. The independence thus gained explains, from a literary standpoint, the great development of satire from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. This satire, harsh and spiteful, creeps at first into the epic poems, the successive rehandlings of which bear traces of the bourgeois mind. In the thirteenth century, the *Roman de Renart* is not only a satire upon feudalism, it is a very witty parody upon epics. The *fabliaux*, the *farces*, the *solies* are all of bourgeois inspiration.

On the other hand, how does literature represent the bourgeois and the peasant? It does not flatter them. The bourgeois is avaricious and self-seeking, the peasant lying and thieving. The two types abound in the *fabliaux* and the *farces*. And the people laughed because for them it was a kind of vengeance to proclaim the vices forced upon them by the greediness of the lords or the misery of their condition. Only one true portrayal of a peasant can be pointed out : in *Aucassin et Nicolette*, when the young count finds himself in the presence of the unfortunate man who has lost one of his oxen. The sincerity of this depiction verges on the sublime.

As regards the serious demands of the people, we find their formidable echo in the second part of the *Roman de la Rose*, or in lyric poets like Rutebeuf and Eustache Deschamps.

#### IV. — EDUCATION, THE UNIVERSITIES, THE MANUSCRIPTS.

**The Schools.** — Charlemagne had established schools which, though at first prosperous, were almost destroyed by the disturbances of the two following centuries. There was a renaissance of education in the twelfth century, and it was in the thirteenth century that it flourished most brilliantly.



In all the schools the teachers were *cleres* (scholars who read and wrote Latin), or monks. In the larger monasteries the schools received, in addition to those who wished to prepare themselves for monastic life, day scholars from all classes of society, especially of the people. In the episcopal *petites écoles* primary instruction was given; and in the *grandes écoles*, instruction corresponding nearly to the French secondary instruction as given in our lycées and colleges. Here above all Latin was studied, and by the *direct method*: the student was forbidden to speak a word of French in class. Few books were used: the Latin grammar *Donat*, that of Alexandre de Villedieu, the *Doctrinal*, and collections of moral extracts, *Calo*, *Théodolet* and *Facet* (1). Only the rich students could provide themselves with a text, for there were not as yet any printed books. The poor students were obliged to make a copy of the text for themselves. When they had to do with an author like Virgil or Quintilius, the students listened while the master read and commented upon the only copy of the book.

**The Universities. The Colleges.** — After the school came the *university*. Mediæval universities were, in principle, groups of colleges administered by one rector. The most celebrated were those of Orléans, Poitiers, Toulouse, Montpellier, etc., but especially that of Paris.

The University of Paris dates from the first years of the thirteenth century. Philip Augustus and his successors granted it privileges and made its laws. This corporation of masters and students occupied the *Latin Quarter*, on the Mount of Saint Genevieve. It was subdivided into four nations: France, Picardy, Normandy and England. Each of these had its own *colleges*, founded by private individuals, where the foundationers lived and worked, receiving instructions from the masters of one of the four Faculties. During the greater part of the Middle Ages, these colleges were no more than houses of refuge for poor students; but later, rich students entered and paid their own expenses. Then professors completed the teaching of the Faculties. The most famous of these colleges were *Clermont*, *Harcourt*, *Navarre*, *Montaigne*, *le Plessis*, *the Scottish*, *the Irish*, etc.

We should mention separately the college founded in 1253 by Robert de Sorbon, canon of Cambrai and confessor to Louis IX. At the Sorbonne theological instruction was gratuitous; and the doctors became celebrated for their science, and subsequently for their quarrels with rival theologians (see *Jansenism* in the seventeenth century).

In the University of Paris were four faculties: *Theology*, *Arts* (science and letters), *Law* and *Medicine*. The principal faculty was that of Theology, which taught *scholastic* philosophy, that is to say, a philosophy founded solely upon

(1) RABELAIS enumerates all these works in his *Gargantua*, chap. xv.

reasoning by deduction, the instrument of which is the *sylogism*. The scholastic philosophy does not deserve all the raillery of which it was the object during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: for Saint Anselm in the tenth century, Abelard and Guillaume de Champeaux in the twelfth, and Saint Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth were great intellects indeed. But this philosophy, by limiting itself to the use of the deductive method, and speaking always of traditional definitions as so many *postulates*, was self-condemned.

In the faculty of Arts, instruction was divided into *trivium* (the three roads) and *quadrivium* (the four roads). The trivium included grammar, rhetoric, dialectic; the *quadrivium*, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. These *seven liberal arts* were studied above all from the standpoint of the services which they could render to religion.

What influence had mediæval education upon literature?

It had great influence upon didactic and moral works, upon ancient epics, and even, to a certain degree, upon romances, which were the branches of literature cultivated by the *clerics*. We feel sure that Guillaume de Lorris, Jean de Meun, Rutebeuf, Eustache Deschamps and the authors of the *Roman de Troie*, of *Alexandre*, of *Parthenopeus de Blois*, had studied, and that they had a knowledge and understanding of antiquity which could be obtained at that time in the universities. The epic *trouveres* and most of the lyric *trouveres* also show this influence: Only the chroniclers who wrote in French may be considered as having been formed outside the universities.

**The Manuscripts.** — How were the new works transmitted and preserved? This point, which appears to be only one of material interest, is of the greatest importance with regard to the authenticity and the circulation of the works. Printing was not known in France before 1470: which means that we cannot consider printing at all in connection with the Middle Ages. As early as the tenth century the jugglers, who carried their epics from castle to castle, used small manuscripts, often fragmentary, which were soon worn out. These were never replaced by the same text but by a text that had been renovated, rejuvenated and interlined. When the feudal lords wished to possess for themselves a copy of *Roland*, *Aliscans*, *Alexandre*, etc., they purchased one of the current forms of the romance or the poem. These were full of errors, omissions and additions. It is rare that several manuscripts present exactly the same text. What, then, can be said of the dramatic manuscripts, altered in every possible way and so soon completely lost? There was more safety for didactic, moral or historical works, because these were generally text books used only by educated people, and preserved from the beginning in the libraries of monasteries, universities and castles, by which means they escaped the continual alterations made by the juggler and the actor.

On the other hand, classical Greek and Latin texts were preserved and contin-

ually copied in the monasteries. In the thirteenth century the University of Paris began to organise and maintain a *library*, with a large staff of copyists. In the fourteenth century, King Charles V collected in his tower at the Louvre a thousand beautiful manuscripts, and this was the nucleus of the French



THE " LIBRARY " OF A WRITER OF THE XV CENTURY

*From a miniature in the Miracles de Notre-Dame.*

Jean Mielot copying on a " roll " of parchment the text of the manuscript which is placed above his head.

Bibliothèque Nationale. The Dukes of Burgundy and Orléans also possessed a few works, often more beautiful in appearance than valuable in subject. Until the end of the fifteenth century the rarity and costliness of the manuscripts was a serious obstruction to a knowledge of antiquity and the progress of education. We shall see the great influence of *printing* upon the Renaissance movement.

## V. — ARTS AND SCIENCES IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

**Arts.** — Mediæval architecture was at first tentative and temporary. Churches were built with wooden frame-work, which exposed them to the danger of fire. It was not until after the fateful date of the year 1000, in the eleventh century, that the first style of great mediæval architecture, the *Romanesque*, was developed. "It might have been said that the world, shaking itself, had thrown off its old garments to clothe itself with a white vestment of churches." The *Romanesque style* is characterized by the *round arch* and by the vault. It has a robustness of form which corresponds well with feudal society, which serves as an appropriate frame for its powerful knights, and harmonises with the architecture of the castles and the ramparts of cities: the church was still a fortress. — And with the *Romanesque* architecture correspond the earliest *chansons de geste*.

Towards the middle of the twelfth century the *round arch* gave way to the *pointed*. The stone vault sprang upward, and the walls gave place to huge windows. The Gothic cathedral became a wonderful symbol. Its lines which mount upward and never descend again, its stained glass and rose windows which through all the hours of the day and night admit into the depths of the nave and the aisles their lights that sparkle or glow with dim mystery, its sculptures, naïve and lifelike — all combine to excite and satisfy the imagination. From the thirteenth century, architecture became the "sovereign art", and everything was subordinated to it. The gothic was soon altered, and its successive aspects corresponded to modifications in social life and taste. It was at first simple and bold; it became *florid*, and towards the end of the fifteenth century, *flamboyant*. The *florid* style approximately corresponds to the *Roman de la Rose* and to Joinville; the *flamboyant*, to the *Mystery Plays*.

From the fourteenth century, French sculpture has a glorious history. Artists of genius, regarded for a long time with scorn, made bas-reliefs, capitals, stalls; and above all statues of an extremely individual and *realistic* conception. This quality of realism is the most noteworthy, and the one we should remember, as it was common to both artists and writers.

**Sciences.** — The Middle Ages were not informed with the *scientific spirit*, except perhaps in *metaphysics*, in which they were much more daring than might be supposed; but they did not work disinterestedly and from pure love of science. They possessed *curiosity*, and on the whole did not really neglect any branch of science. We should note here the influence of the Arabs by whom not only the knowledge of the Alexandrians was brought to us, but who spread throughout Europe inventions which they themselves had borrowed from India and China. If, too often, chemistry was only alchemy, and astronomy





*The Cardinal and Theological Virtues.*

Justice, Prudence, Force and Temperance; Faith, Hope and Charity.  
The Saints who personify these virtues are seated at their feet.



*The Liberal Arts.*

Arithmetic having at his feet Pythagoras, Geometry with Euclid; Astronomy and Ptolemy, Music and Tubalcain, Dialectics and Aristotle, Rhetoric and Cicero, Grammar and Donatus.

THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

From the *Triomphe de Saint Thomas Aquinas*, xvi century fresco in Santa-Maria Novella, Florence.

astrology, it would be a serious mistake to think that there was no scientific progress during the Middle Ages. Such progress was slow but genuine, as may be proved by the names of *Gerbert* (Sylvestre II., died 1003), *Jean de Gerlande* (IX century), *Albert le Grand*, *Roger Bacon*, *Pierre d'Ailly*, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin*, *Raymond Lulle* (XIII century). Nearly all the savants were monks, and the motive of their researches was doubtless to glorify God, but they developed none the less the mathematical, physical and natural sciences<sup>(1)</sup>. Literature, however, reaped no profit from these; and it is precisely certain details found in the romancers and poets, or in works of popular edification like the *Lapidaires*, the *Bestiaires*, etc., which most falsify our conception of mediæval science. All serious science, written in Latin, remained shut up in the monasteries, or jealously hidden in the laboratories of the alchemists who feared that if they divulged it, they would be regarded as sorcerers.

## VI. — EXTERNAL INFLUENCES.\*

The different classes of society, particularly the clergy and the aristocracy, were not subjected only to local and permanent influences, evolving slowly and normally. They were profoundly affected by external influences, and this must not be forgotten in any attempt to reconstitute mediæval society from a study of the texts. Each of these influences was produced as the result of some great historical event:

1. **The Arab invasion** brought back to the West a scientific treasure which had been forgotten since its destruction or suppression by the Northern barbarians. By the Arabs the essentials of the mathematical sciences, medicine, the Aristotelian philosophy, etc., were restored to us. They also brought with them poetry rich in images, by which the troubadours profited, and marvellous tales of which traces are found in the romances and *fabliaux*, and finally an architecture a few masterpieces of which still exist in Spain.

2. **The Conquest of England by the Normans** (1066) resulted in an enrichment of French epic and romantic poetry by the Celtic legends (*Tristan*, *Arthur* and the *Table Ronde*, etc.).

3. **The Crusades** (1096-1270) brought the French knights into relationship with their comrades-in-arms of the other Christian countries, England, Germany, Italy, Hungary, and began to create a sort of *cosmopolitanism*. From

(1) Compare RAMBAUD, *Histoire de la Civilisation française*, I, chap. xviii.

this time dates, to a certain degree, the diffusion of French literature, due also to other causes, but facilitated by this.

The Crusades revealed Byzantium and the East to the French knights. They had left their castles and towns with the conviction that they were going to fight against barbarians encamped in a desolate country. The luxury and splendour of the East dazzled them. Byzantium, whose civilisation, half Grecian, half Oriental, was at that period so brilliant, had already given the French something of its literature and learning. But after the fourth Crusade the West was invaded by a singular Byzantine romanticism which was incoherently mingled, sometimes with Breton legends (*Cligés*), sometimes with the then naïve knowledge of antiquity (*Alexandre*).

As we follow the changes and rehandlings of French narrative poetry after the twelfth century, and especially in the thirteenth, we feel that the interest of the audiences had become more eager and more easily pleased, whether they had themselves waged war in those marvellous countries, or had only listened to the tales of returning warriors.

**4. The War of the Albigenes**, though its immediate effect in the thirteenth century was to destroy the refined civilization and *gai saber* of the South, acted at this period on most of the northern knights as the Italian expeditions acted upon the fellow soldiers of Charles VIII, of Louis XII and of François I, at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries. It was then that the lyric poetry of the north was penetrated and transformed by that of the troubadours, adopting its *theories* and its *rhythms*. From being popular and satirical the lyric poetry of the north became, in its turn, gallant and courtly.

**5. The Hundred Years' War**, from 1337 to 1453, caused material and social ravages in France which it would be impossible to estimate. From this war the Chronicle, which had languished somewhat since the Crusades, received a new and infinite variety of material. Across the horrors of this long struggle, one genre of literature only took an astonishing flight forward: the serious and comic drama. Perhaps the people found in the theatre the most complete forgetfulness of their miseries.

**6.** Except the Celtic legends of Great Britain and the Greco-Byzantine literature, FOREIGN LITERATURES do not seem to have exerted any influence upon French mediæval works. On the contrary, it was the French *chansons de geste* and romances which spread throughout Europe and gave rise there to numberless imitations, which later were themselves imitated by the French. However, some German influence may be observed in the *Roman de Renart*, and, by way of Provence, Italian influences penetrated as far as the lyrical poetry of the North. — English literature, moreover, only began with the *Canterbury Tales* of Chau-

cer, at the end of the fourteenth century. In Germany the first text of the *Nibelungen* appeared at the beginning of the thirteenth century; but German literature produced nothing else until the songs of the *Minnesingers* and the *Meistersingers* in the sixteenth century. Spain produced in the twelfth century her *Romancero del Cid*, and some romances which later formed the *romancero*. Of them all, Italy alone enjoyed a great century, the fourteenth, with her Dante (died 1375), Petrarch (died 1374) and Boccaccio (died 1375), but their influence was to be most evident in the sixteenth century.



ORNAMENT FROM A CARLOVINGIAN MANUSCRIPT

Called the *Bible of Saint-Denis*.





PAGE DECORATION FROM A MANUSCRIPT OF THE XIII CENTURY

## CHAPTER II.

### FEUDAL LITERATURE.

#### THE CHANSONS DE GESTE.

##### SUMMARY

**GESTE** signifies **exploit**, and the **chansons de geste** are **epics**, while the **Arthurian Cycle** contains only **romances**, and the **Ancient cycle**, only learned adaptations.

1. **EARLIEST BEGINNINGS.** Two theories : a) In Germany **sentimental songs of war** are sung ; under the Merovingians they are composed first in **Latin**, then, in the ninth century, in **Romance** when the subject is Clovis and Dagobert and above all Charlemagne. These **songs** are developed and, from the end of the XI century, form **epics**. — b) The **Chansons de geste** originate in the XI and XII centuries in the form which we now possess ; they are works of **literature**, composed by French poets.

2. **DEVELOPMENT AND DECADENCE.** The **chansons de geste** are at first carried about by jugglers, from city to city, and from castle to castle ; they are **assonant** ; in the thirteenth century they are **rhymed**, as they are then beginning to be read ; in the fifteenth century they are re-written in prose,

and become more and more garbled till we reach the adaptations of the eighteenth century (*Bibliothèque bleue*). After 1832 scholars begin to publish authentic texts.

3. **WE MAY DISTINGUISH THREE CYCLES** or groups of epics: *Geste du Roi*, *Geste de Guillaume d'Orange*, *Geste de Doon de Mayence*. Among the first should be especially noted the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* and the *Chanson de Roland*; among the second, *Aliscans*; among the third, *Renaud de Montauban* (*Les Quatre fils Aymon*). — Among non-classified feudal chansons, *Raoul de Cambrai*.

4. **THE CHANSON DE ROLAND**. The story becomes legendary; the subject is made grander by the rank of the heroes and of their adversaries, and has a denouement. Unity and simplicity of the plan, variety of the episodes and characters; simplicity of the marvellous; style lofty and poetic.

5. **DIFFUSION AND INFLUENCE** of the *chansons de geste* throughout all Europe, especially in Italy, from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries.



DECORATED LETTER  
from a manuscript of the  
XI century

**Definition.** — The Latin word *gesta* signifies deeds (1). A *geste* is then, in the etymological sense, a celebrated deed, and *chanson de geste* is the equivalent of *chanson d'exploits*. The word *geste* has also been employed to signify cycle, to designate a collection of poems relating to one hero, as *La Geste de Charlemagne*, *La Geste de Guillaume*, etc.

The name *epic* must only be given to the *chansons de geste*. The cycle of the Round Table consists of romances, and the cycle of antiquity, of adaptations of the ancient Greek and Latin poems, more or less altered, and with certain Byzantine elements added.

These last two cycles will be studied separately in the chapters devoted to *literature courtly* and *learned literature*.

## I. — EARLIEST BEGINNINGS.

**Theory of the Songs.** — Until within recent years, the historians of French literature had adopted, with certain restrictions and modifications, a theory which dates from the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the promoters of which were the Grimm brothers in Germany, and Fauriel in France. We shall first set forth this theory, to which Gaston Paris has given definite form.

(1) Several mediæval Latin chronicles are intitled: *Gesta Francorum*, *Gesta Regum Francorum*, etc. This neutre Latin plural gave in French the feminine *geste* (Compare *folia*, *feuille*).

**The Epic in General.** — The *epic* is the poetic and heroic form which young nations instinctively give to history. This form appears simultaneously with the national consciousness. At first short, and more like a *song* than a *poem*, it celebrates in lyrical rhythm, the exploits of a hero. These *songs* were at first repeated by the soldiers, and in time of peace, carried about by the Greek *aèdes*, the mediæval jugglers, etc. Then the *narrative* element was developed and the *lyrical* disappeared.

In this way the Greek epic came into being, and nearer our time, the German epic. The *Iliad*, the *Nibelungen*, were preceded by an outburst of short poetical songs which were sometimes collected together, and sometimes contained the germ of a great work. But this transformation of the song or *cantilène* into the epic poem did not take place in every country: see, for instance, the Spanish *Ballads*.

*Germanic Origin of Chansons de Geste.* — The first French songs of the Middle Ages are of Germanic origin.

We have no reason to believe that the Gallo-Romans consecrated any poems or *chansons* to the glory of heroes. Not very warlike, after their complete subjugation by the Romans, scoffers rather than enthusiasts, fine talkers rather than ardent doers, it can well be said of them that they did not have *la tête épique*. We have, on the contrary, authentic testimony that the Germans were accustomed to celebrate the warlike exploits of their ancestors and their leaders (1). It is said that the Emperor Charlemagne himself composed a collection of these old Teutonic *cantilènes*.

At what epoch were the *epic cantilènes* first composed in popular Latin? Probably from the time of the baptism of Clovis (496). This event, says Gaston Paris, « aroused immense enthusiasm, and lent itself the more readily as a subject for poetry because of its connection with the influence of a woman, with a marriage the circumstances of which had been singular, and with one of those tragic histories of family vengeance so often met with in the Germanic epic... Around Chlodovech there was formed, and doubtless very early, a whole epic cycle; and it is extremely probable that several of its episodes were sung in popular Latin (2).

After Clovis, Dagobert excited the imagination of the people. His victory over the Saxons (620) gave rise, according to the testimony of an ecclesiastical historian of the eighth century, to a poem in the Romance tongue (3).

(1) G. PARIS, *Littérature française au moyen âge*, § 13.

(2) *Id.*, *ibid.*, § 15.

(3) It is believed that fragments of these short Merovingian epics have been found in a poem of which we possess a rehandling of the twelfth century, but which must date from the tenth, *Floovant*. Finally, in the *Vie de saint Foron*, written in the ninth century by Helgaire, Bishop of Meaux, we have the *Latin* translation of two stanzas borrowed from an epic chanson in *langue rustique* (corrupt Latin), and relating to Clotaire. In short, it seems evident that they did not wait for the exploits of Charlemagne in order to compose *cantilènes* designed to celebrate the virtues and victories of the Frankish kings. A Belgian scholar, Godefroi Kurth, has gone still further. Reviving, a propos of French history, the hypothesis set forth by Niebuhr concerning

As Clovis, Clotaire and Dagobert had inspired *cantilènes*, so much more did Charles Martel and Charlemagne. In the eighth and ninth centuries, the Frankish nationality, as yet scarcely formed, was imperilled by an enemy at once political and religious, the Saracen. The closer union which resulted from a common danger; the fears, hopes, triumphs which created a single soul, national and Christian, from all these hitherto partially mingled racial elements; the feeling of safety in strength which followed the definite retreat of the invaders, — all these were excellent conditions for the development of epic poetry. It was thus that in Greece the Homeric epic was born during the period of national security which followed the destruction of Troy, the event which symbolised the first European triumph over the constantly recurring invasions from Asia.

It is almost certain that from the ninth century poems of some importance were composed in the popular tongue, *Romance*, on Charles Martel, Charlemagne and other heroes of the wars between the Christians and the Saracens. But the popular imagination simplified and unified the story: Charlemagne became the centre and the hero of the exploits accomplished during his reign and of those of his predecessors (1). Louis the Debonair is also the hero of several poems; but the contests of his successors do not seem to have given rise to any epic. Under Charles the Bald the feudal system then organised furnished new material for narrative poetry, and those poems appeared which sing the rivalries of the great vassals. « The latest events memorialised for us by the epic », wrote Gaston Paris, « belong to the second half of the tenth century. With the accession of the third race, the period of spontaneous epic production closed (2). » — There must be added to this, however, a last renaissance evoked by the Crusades.

**The theory of M. J. Bédier.** — The successor of Gaston Paris at the *Collège de France*, M. Joseph Bédier, devoted his lectures from 1904 to 1911 to the *chansons de geste*. These lectures were afterwards published, from 1908 to 1913, under the title: *Les Légendes épiques* (3). The following is a brief summing up of M. Bédier's conclusions, which would seem to destroy the theory held up to the present time:

a) No authentic, original text remains to us of those lyrico-epic hymns, or of those songs, which were composed the day after some victory or disaster, and the development or fusion of which is supposed to have resulted in the epics of the XI, XII and XIII centuries.

the history of the kings of Rome, he thinks himself in a position to affirm that the French Merovingians are known to us, so to speak, only *through the epic*. Their exploits, before having been registered by history, had been transformed into epic legends. Because of this, criticism is confronted with the necessity of clearing up a veritable chaos. (G. KURTH, *Histoire poétique des Mérovingiens*. Bruxelles, 1893.)

(1) G. PARIS, *Histoire poétique de Charlemagne*, Paris, 1865.

(2) G. PARIS, *Littérature française au moyen âge*, § 19.

(3) *Les Légendes épiques. Recherches sur la formation des Chansons de geste*. Paris, Champion, 4 vol., 1908-1913.



b) The historical portions of our principal *chansons de geste* display profound ignorance of real facts and personages. It seems as if the author of *Roland* or of *Aliscans* is not linked to the subject of which he treats by any anterior series of poems.

c) On the contrary, one is struck by the fact that each epic is in close relation with *local legends*, especially with the churches, tombs, feasts, pilgrimages. The *Geste de Guillaume* accords with the chief stages on the *via Tolosana* followed by pilgrims going from Nîmes to Saint-Jacques-de-Compostelle. The *Chanson de Roland* is related to the principal stages of the roads which led to Pampelune by Roncevaux.

d) The *chansons de geste* originated in the neighbourhood of these sanctuaries, whither the jugglers, in collaboration with the *clercs* and the monks, wished to attract and hold the pilgrims,—and they originated in the XI century only, and were contemporary with the Crusades,—and they were entirely of French inspiration and made by Frenchmen.

e) Finally, we possess versions of these *chansons* identical with or closely resembling the originals;—and we should study them as literary works, applying to them the principles of literary criticism, instead of wasting time in an attempt to discover traces or remains in them of hypothetical *cantilènes*.



CHARLEMAGNE OF THE POPULAR TRADITION

From a miniature of the end of the XIV century, in a manuscript of the *Grandes Chroniques de France*.

## II. — DEVELOPMENT AND DECADENCE OF THE CHANSONS DE GESTE.

**Development and change of subject in the chansons de geste.** — We know that at the Battle of Hastings, a Norman named Taillefer sang the *Chanson de Roland* (4). This was in 1066. This chanson, if we are to accept the authority

(1) AUG. THIERRY, *Conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands*, t. I, p. 341 (see note 5).

of Gaston Paris and Léon Gautier, was a rehandling of the primitive poem, and must have equally differed from the *Roland* which the Oxford MS. of 1080 has preserved to us.

Our most ancient texts, the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* (1060) and the *Chanson de Roland* (1080), would not represent, therefore, a first version, but one of the versions in a series not yet finished

Even if we adopt the theory of M. J. Bédier, we should not deny that certain poems were subjected to rehandling after their composition in the XI or XII centuries.

These works lent themselves only too easily to such incessant transformation. Their frame-work was wide and supple, and nothing was easier than to interpolate an episode, or extravagantly lengthen some combat. And the jugglers, according to the region in which they practiced their art, never failed to satisfy the interest of their audiences. (1).

**Changes in form of the chansons de geste. The Jugglers. — Assonance.** — Until the end of the twelfth century the *Chansons de geste* were written in decasyllabic assonant verses. During that period they were sung, and the assonance sufficed for the ear, giving the same sound to the last accented syllable of each verse, without any attention to the group of consonants which followed. Thus *bise* is assonant with *dire*, and *visage* with *arbre*. A very simple tune accompanied the recitation or sing-song of the juggler. These decasyllabic assonant verses were grouped in *stanzas*, with the same assonance, masculine or feminine. The length of the *stanzas* varies, the average being of fifteen verses. The *Chanson de Roland* contains about three hundred *stanzas*.

The juggler (*joculator*) went from castle to castle or from city to city, with his *hurdy-gurdy*, or his *rote* worn cross-wise, and his MSS. of small format.

We may imagine then some hall in a feudal castle of the eleventh or twelfth centuries, whose massive and frowning architecture forms the ideal as well as the actual scene of these *gestes*. On the walls hang trophies of war, and shields with heraldic symbols significant of recent events, with lances and swords all ready for the battle or the tournament. The audience—knights, squires, pages, valets, even ladies, are prepared by their daily lives to experience and multiply the emotions suggested to them by the juggler. These grandiose episodes, which make us smile, living as we do in a social and scientific civilisation, are for them but an enlarged but direct projection of what they have themselves seen and done.

(1) From the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries ingenious efforts were made to group certain *chansons de geste* with others; *cycles* were arbitrarily created of which the heroes were related; suitable episodes were invented, not only in defiance of all historical or critical sense, but also without the least power of imagination, — biographical poems about the *infancy* of Ogier, of Guillaume or of Garin, — interminable sequels — *Huon de Bordeaux* (XII century) has no less than five sequels written in the thirteenth century

The rhyme substituted for the assonance. — But this period soon passes; and in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the *chansons de geste* were no longer recited but read. The MSS., for a long time only in the hands of the jugglers, who modified them at will, began to increase in number and to become definitive. Assonance, which was intended for the ear only, was replaced by rhyme. For this purpose all the old poems were rewritten, and consequently considerably changed. Literary influences subtly acted upon them: for it was especially women who read.

Prose substituted for verse. — Finally, from the middle of the fifteenth century, prose was substituted for rhymed verse; rhyme was taken out of *chansons de geste*. It was these prose versions which

the earliest printers were to popularise; and it is thus that French epics, constantly rewritten, ended in the absurdities and insipidities of the *Bibliothèque bleue* and the *Bibliothèque des romans* (1).

It was not until 1832 that the first publication of a discovered *chanson de geste* appeared: at that time Paulin Paris published the first authentic edition of *Berte aux grands pieds*, and in 1836, *Roland*. After this date, all the old texts, completely restored by French and other Romance scholars, supersede the rubbish of the prose rewritings.

To-day, then, we are able to know and appreciate, in their most ancient poetic



PÉPIN KILLS THE LION

From a miniature of the end of the XIII century, in a manuscript of *Berte aux Grands Pieds*.

(1) By the name of *Bibliothèque bleue* are designated the « modernised » reprints of *chansons de geste* and romances of adventure published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries at Troyes, Rouen, Lyons, Epinal, etc (Compare NISARD, *Histoire des Livres Populaires*, 1854). — It is inaccurate to name *Bibliothèque des romans* the elegant adaptations of these same poems by the Count de Tressan, which appeared under the title : *Corps d'extraits de Romans de Chevalerie*, 4 vol. Paris, 1782.

form preserved to us, the most celebrated of old French epics. But let us not forget that neither Ronsard, when he dreamed of becoming the Homer of France, nor Boileau, when he railed at the disordered *art of old French romancers*, nor Victor Hugo, when he manifested enthusiasm, rather thoughtlessly, for the decadent Middle Ages, had ever seen the authentic texts of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It was the prose compilations of the fifteenth century which had aroused their disdain or their admiration.

### III. — THE THREE EPIC CYCLES. INDIVIDUAL GESTES

**Division of French Epics into Cycles.** — It is customary to subdivide French epics into three *cycles* or *gestes*: *Geste du Roi* or *de Charlemagne*; *Geste de Garin de Montglane* or *de Guillaume d'Orange*; *Geste de Doon de Mayence*.

#### 1. GESTE DE CHARLEMAGNE.

A complete « poetic history » of Charlemagne can be compiled from the *chansons de geste* devoted to him; but these texts must be arranged in biographical order, and not according to their dates of composition.

**Berte aux grands pieds** is a poem relating to the mother of Charlemagne (XIII century. The version which we possess is attributed to a Brabançon poet named Adenet, surnamed The King of the Trouveres). Berte is the daughter of the King and Queen of Hungary, Floire and Blanchefleur. Coming to France to marry King Pépin, she is betrayed by her cousin Tybert, who sends one of her servants to her husband in place of herself, and has her condemned to death. Wandering in the forest of Mans where she has taken refuge, Berte finally succeeds in proving her identity and her innocence; she is brought back to Paris and her persecutors punished. It is, in substance, the popular tale of the faithful persecuted wife: compare *Geneviève de Brabant*, *Grisélidis*, etc. (1).

**Mainet** is the story of Charlemagne as a child. *Mainet* is the diminutive of *Maigne* or *Magne*, and signifies, "The little Magne, the little Charlemagne (2)."

**La Reine Sibile** has for its subject the wife of Charlemagne. In this *chanson* is the episode of the *Chien le Montargis* (3).

**Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne** is the narrative of a supposed journey of the Emperor to Jerusalem and to Constantinople. This is one of our most ancient texts, and presents the peculiarity of being written in verses of twelve syllables. Accompanied by his peers — among them Ogier the Dane, Archbishop Turpin, Roland, Olivier and

(1) Read the two extracts from *Berte aux grands pieds* in the *Chrestomathie* of CLÉDAT, p. 57. — J. BÉDIER, *Légendes épiques*, t. III, 4; IV, 374.

(2) *Chrestomathie* of CLÉDAT, p. 43. — J. BÉDIER, III, 4, 16; IV, 272.

(3) We possess this *chanson* only in an Italianate form, entitled *Macaire*: the original was called *La Reine Sibile*. — J. BÉDIER, IV, 218, 427.



Guillaume of the short nose, — Charlemagne arrives at Jerusalem, and there obtains from the patriarch certain relics to bring back to France. He then goes to Constantinople, of which the poet writes a marvellous description. King Hugon receives him in an enchanted palace where, after the banquet, Charlemagne and his peers amuse themselves by boasting : they intend to accomplish the most extraordinary and improbable exploits. It is the scene of the *gabs*. Hugo has heard all, and is scandalised by the boasts of his guests ; and he declares that he will have their heads cut off if they do not fulfill their absurd promises. The French then become very much embarrassed ; but the Deity comes to their rescue, and enables them to make true their *gabs*. (1).

**Huon de Bordeaux.** — Huon, son of Seguin, Duke of Bordeaux, having killed Charlemagne's son, Charlot, is condemned by the emperor to undergo certain trials. Huon must go to Babylon, cut off the beard of the emir, draw out four large teeth and bring them back to Charlemagne. He is happily aided in this enterprise by a dwarf named Obéron. — The first part alone is founded upon historical events, the dates of which have been changed. The second part is like a wondertale, and the name of the delightful dwarf, Obéron, was used by Shakespeare in his *Midsummer's Night's Dream*. — Huon dates from the end of the twelfth century (2).

Such are the principal chansons relating to the private history of Charlemagne and his family. Let us now consider those which dealt with the conquests of the great emperor, or with his contests with some of his vassals.

**Les Saisnes** (or Saxons), of which we possess a version brought up to the end of the twelfth century, by Jean Bodel of Arras, relates to the expeditions of Charlemagne against the Saxons, and contains references to the wars of Clotaire II and Dagobert.

**La Chanson de Roland**, to which we will revert later, forms, with *Gui de Bourgogne* and *Anséis de Carthage*, a group relating to the Spanish wars.

**Oger or Ogier the Dane** has to do with the first difficulties of the emperor with his chief vassals. The author of this twelfth century chanson was Raimbert de Paris. In the thirteenth century, Adenet le Roi composed *Les Enfances Ogier*, designed to serve as an introduction to the work of Raimbert. (By *enfances* is meant the first exploits of a hero) (3).

Finally, **Le Roi Louis** is a fragment of a poem of the eleventh century, in which is recounted the victory of Louis III over the Normans in 881 ; — and **Le Couronnement de Louis** (Louis the Debonnaire), which also belongs to the geste of Guillaume d'Orangé (4).

(1) Read extracts from the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* in G. PARIS, *Chrestomathie*, p. 3, and in M. CLÉDAT's, p. 37. — J. BÉDIER, *Légendes épiques*, t. IV, p. 141.  
(2) *Chrestomathie* de CLÉDAT, p. 49. — G. PARIS, *Poèmes et Légendes du moyen âge*, p. 24. — J. BÉDIER, III, 174 ; IV, 153.

(3) Some critics place *Ogier* in the third cycle : we follow Gaston Paris. — J. BÉDIER, II, 281.

(4) Read in the *Chrestomathie* of GASTON PARIS, p. 27, the scene where Guillaume punishes the insolence of Arnéis d'Orléans, who wishes to seize the crown. — J. BÉDIER, I, 194.

## 2. GESTE OF GARIN DE MONTGLANE OR OF GUILLAUME D'ORANGE.

"Guillaume au court nez (or au *courb nez*)," says Gaston Paris, "also called Guillaume d'Orange, or Guillaume Fièrbrace (*fera brachia*), or Guillaume de Narbonne, is an epic hero embodying diverse personages which have not all yet been identified. The chief of these, who has little by little absorbed all the others, is Guillaume, Count of Toulouse, who prevented the Saracens from invading France by a bloody battle on the banks of the Orbieu (an affluent of the Aude, right bank), in the year 793; who, while governor of Aquitaine, — of which the future Louis the Debonnaire was king), conquered Catalonia: who, finally, founded the monastery of Gellone, now Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert, whither he retired in 840, and died in the odour of sanctity in 812, one year before the coronation of Louis the Debonnaire (1)." The *trouvères* have constructed a complete genealogy for Guillaume d'Orange. His great-grandfather is Garin de Montglane, whose son is Girard de Vienne; the latter is the uncle of Aimeri de Narbonne, himself ~~uncle~~ of Guillaume. Guillaume, in his turn, has Vivien for nephew.

The most interesting *chansons* of this voluminous *geste* are the following:

**Girard de Vienne.** — The son of Garin, Girard, has received as his fief the city of Vienne. After bloody conflicts with Charlemagne, he retires to Vienne where he is besieged for seven years. Among his bravest barons is his nephew Olivier, whose sister is the beautiful Aude. Roland, who is fighting in company with his uncle, Charlemagne, perceives Aude, falls in love with her and wishes to carry her off; but Olivier prevents him. At length, it is decided that a duel between Roland and Olivier will terminate the war. The two warriors are taken to an island in the Rhône, where they fight, while from afar Charlemagne, Girard and Aude watch anxiously their gigantic and interminable struggle. An angel separates them and orders them to make friends again so as to unite their forces against the Saracens. Olivier gives Roland the hand of his sister, Aude. This last episode was used by Victor Hugo in his *Légende des Siècles*, under the title of *Le Mariage de Roland* (2).

**Aimeri de Narbonne.** — On his return from Spain, saddened by the death of Roland at Roncevaux, Charlemagne comes to the city of Narbonne, which belongs to the Saracens. He desires to conquer it, and offers it to any one of his barons who shall be able to take it. But all of them, even the bravest, declare that they are in haste to return to their homes, and Charlemagne, irritated, sends them away. However, a young knight named Aimeri, nephew of Girard de Vienne, accepts the proposal of the emperor and captures the city. The *trouvère* next relates how Aimeri married Hermangart de

(1) G. PARIS, *Chrestomathie*, p. 27. — M. JOSEPH BÉDIER has devoted the first volume of his *Légendes épiques* to Guillaume; according to him, there is but one historical character in this *Geste*, Guillaume, Count of Toulouse, founder of the monastery of Gellone. "The authors of the *Chansons de geste* learned from the monks of Gellone — and could only have learned from them — the few authentic facts they record of their Guillaume, and which form the sole historical basis of their countless tale (vol. I, p. 404).

(2) Read the combat of Roland and Olivier in the *Chrestomathie* of CLÉDAT, p. 92. — J. BÉDIER, I, 24.

Pavie : of this marriage was born Guillaume d'Orange. The reader will have recognised, in the first part of the poem, the subject treated by Victor Hugo in *Aymerillot* (*Légende des Siècles*) (1).

**Le Charroi de Nîmes.** — Guillaume takes Nîmes, thanks to a stratagem which furnishes the title of the *chanson*. He conceals a thousand knights in barrels, and, disguised as a carter, he himself drives the *charroi* into the Saracen city (2).

**La Prise d'Orange** tells us how Guillaume conquered the city of Orange and married the beautiful Orable, widow of a Saracen king, who became Christian and took the name of Guibourc.

**Aliscans** is the most celebrated and beautiful *chanson* of this cycle, and its first part merits classical rank as much as the *Roland*. Guillaume fights, in the plain of Aliscans (3), an innumerable Saracen army; he is defeated, and flies towards Orange. Under a tree, near a fountain, he finds his nephew Vivien, mortally wounded after having fought all day. Vivien dies in the arms of his uncle, who tries in vain to carry away his body. Pursued on all sides, Guillaume only escapes by putting on Saracen armour. Finally he arrives at the walls of Orange. But Guibourc, his wife, refuses to have the gates opened for him. She will not admit the possibility that Guillaume could run away, and orders him to return to the battle to save a convoy of Christian prisoners. Guillaume obeys, and is able to return again to his town. He soon leaves it to go and ask help of King Louis.



AIMERI DE NARBONNE RECEIVES A MESSENGER FROM CHARLEMAGNE

« How the King orders Aimeri to send his children to him. »

From a miniature of the end of the XIII century, in a manuscript of the DÉPARTEMENT DES ENFANS AIMERI

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle, p. 957; — *Chrestomathie* by G. PARIS, p. 63. Concerning the group of Aimeri de Narbonne, cf. J. BÉDIER's *Légendes épiques*, vol. I, p. 23.

(2) Read, in the *Chrestomathie* of M. CLÉDAT the passage entitled: *Le comte Guillaume et l'Empereur Louis*. — J. BÉDIER, I, 65.

(3) In connection with the plain of Aliscans, see *Les Villes d'art célèbres: Nîmes et Arles*, by ROGER PEYRE. Paris, Renouard.

— In the second part (return and triumph of Guillaume), a grotesque character appears, a sort of giant named Renouart (1), who fights with a tincl (club). In 1903 a *Chanson de Guillaume* was discovered of an earlier date than *Aliscans* or the *Chevalerie Vivien* (2).

The history of Guillaume and of his nephew is completed, on one hand, in *Les Enfances Vivien* and *La Chevalerie Vivien*; on the other hand, in *Le Moniage Guillaume* (the hero becomes a monk) and *Le Moniage Renouart* (in the mock-heroic manner).

### 3. GESTE OF DOON DE MAYENCE.

Doon de Mayence is the ancestor of the four sons of Aimon de Dordone, the most celebrated of whom is Renaud de Montauban, who gives his name to the principal chanson of this rather confused cycle.

**Renaud de Montauban.** — Renaud and his brothers, being pursued by Charlemagne, are welcomed by Yon, King of Gascony. They build the castle of Montauban, where they sustain a long siege by the emperor. They then leave Montauban and go to Trémoigne. Renaud fights with Ogier, with Roland, with Charlemagne himself. At length peace is concluded. The four sons of Aimon are compelled to yield up their famous horse, Bayard, who had carried all four of them on his back throughout the dangers of the flight and of the battle. Bayard is thrown into the Meuse; but he breaks the stone which had been attached to his neck, and takes refuge in the Ardennes forest. — Renaud makes an expedition to Jerusalem, where he triumphs over the Emir of Persia. Then, by way of penitence, he engages himself as a common mason among the workmen who are building the Cathedral of Cologne. Killed by his companions, he comes to life again in order to reach Trémoigne, where he is buried in a manner appropriate to his dignity (3).

This chanson, so full of variety and abounding in warlike, romantic and miraculous episodes, was incessantly rehandled and brought up to date. Under the title of *Les Quatre fils Aymon*, it has always remained one of the most popular of the chansons.

In *Renaud*, an enchanter named *Maugis*, became in his turn the subject of a later poem.

### 4. INDIVIDUAL GESTES. — NON-CLASSIFIED CHANSONS.

**The Geste des Loherains, or Lorrains**, is composed of several poems, the most celebrated of which is *Garin*, which contains a very beautiful scene in the death of Bégon. — Bégon, a lorrain, is hunting the wild-boar, and is drawn by the chase into the country of his enemy, Fromont of Bordeaux. Bégon (4) is killed by the gamekeepers and serfs of Fromont. This event is followed by a succession of reprisals and vengeance.

(1) Compare with Renouart of the Club the Morgant of Pulci (an Italian poet who died in 1487); Morgant is a giant, taken and converted by Roland, who fights with a bell-clapper.

(2) J. BÉDIER, I, 78.

(3) Read, in the *Chrestomathie* of CLÉDAT, the *Combat contre Charlemagne et contre Roland*, p. 111. J. BÉDIER, IV, 189.

(4) Read, in the *Récits extraits des poètes et prosateurs du moyen âge*, de G. PARIS, the *Mort de Bégon*, p. 40.



**Raoul de Cambrai.** — Raoul is the most accomplished type of the primitive feudal knight, at-once courageous, brutal and ferocious; and the original beauty of the poem is due to the close and logical development of this character. Raoul, in order to get possession of the fief of Vermandois, devastates the country and burns the Abbey of Origny. He then gives combat to Ernaut de Douai, uncle of his squire, Bernier. Here the situation is particularly dramatic and psychological, as the unfortunate Bernier is agitated and restrained by conscientious scruples: his mother has been burned by Raoul in the monastery of Origny; his uncle Ernaut is wounded and pursued by Raoul — but Raoul is his suzerain, and Bernier dares not defend Ernaut. At length, all of Ernaut's defenders having been cut to pieces, and the dreadful pursuit becoming more intense than ever, Bernier decides to draw sword against Raoul and kills him. This passage is one of the finest descriptions of a combat in French literature, and is as accurate as it is impassioned (1).



THE HORSE BAYART CARRYING THE FOUR SONS ALEXON

From a miniature of the end of the XIII century  
in a manuscript of *Renaud de Montauban*.

**Ami et Amile.** — Ami, stricken with leprosy, can only be cured by bathing in the blood of the two children of Amile. Amile does not hesitate to give this proof of devotion and gratitude to Ami who formerly saved his life. Ami is cured; but God performs a miracle to recompense Amile, who, returning to the room where he had cut the throats of his children, finds them living, and playing on their bed with a golden apple (2).

The cycle of *La Croisade* was formed late, after the age of epic production was over. The chansons of this cycle are nothing else than history in rhyme. Their dryness proves that great events are not in themselves sufficient to produce poetry, and that poetry is entirely subjective and has only its moment. We may note the *Chanson de Jérusalem* or *d'Antioche*, and the *Chevalier au Cygne*. All these chansons were rehandled in the fourteenth century (3).

(1) Read, in the *Chrestomathie* of G. PARIS, the *Combat de Raoul et d'Ernaut et la mort de Raoul*, p. 37. — *Morceaux choisis*, 2 cycle, p. 17. — J. BÉDIER, II, 319.

(2) Read, in the *Chrestomathie* of CLÉDAT, *Ami et Amile se retrouvant et se reconnaissant*, p. 122. — J. BÉDIER, II, 170.

(3) G. PARIS, *Littérature française au moyen âge*, § 29.

## THE LEGEND IN CHURCH

This window, which dates from the 13th century, which still ornaments Chartres Cathedral, is a representation of the legend of Charlemagne and his twelve peers themselves, but two Latin versions of the legend of Charlemagne's supposed victory over the Saracens in the *Chronique du Faux Turpin*.

The legend may be followed in the medallion on the right.

Charlemagne assists at a mass celebrated by Saint Giles.

Badouin, Roland's brother, is with him during his last moments.	Badouin announces Roland's death to Charlemagne.
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Roland blows his horn and splits a rock with his sword.

Roland kills Marsile at Roncevaux.	Charlemagne returns to Roncevaux.
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Battle of Roncevaux.

The war of Charlemagne against the Saracen Agolant.	Miracle of the spear-bursting in bloom.
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Charlemagne builds the basilica of Compostella in honour of Saint James.





# CHARLEMAGNE AND HIS WIDOWS

and of the XII century and  
al, has taken for the illus-  
not the *Chansons de geste*  
a legendary account of  
Constantinople; and second

beginning at the lowest

Charlemagne's  
day before  
Empelune.

Taking of Pau-  
pelune by the  
French.

the Emperor's Departure.

Charlemagne be-  
ds in the  
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ay (called  
the Middle  
ges The  
ad of St Ja-  
s) and asks  
an expla-  
tion of this  
phenomenon.

Saint James ap-  
pears to the  
Emperor and  
bids him go to  
Spain to res-  
cue his tomb.

Charlemagne places the Holy  
Gn on the altar of his Chapel  
at Aix.

defeat of  
the Saracens  
before Jerusa-  
m.

Constantine ma-  
kes a present  
of some of the  
relics of the  
Passion to  
Charlemagne.

Constantine receives  
Charlemagne.

the Bishops  
urge Charle-  
magne to set  
out for the de-  
livery of Jeru-  
salem.

Constantine,  
Emperor of  
Constantino-  
ple, sees Char-  
lemagne in a  
dream as his  
deliverer.

the Signature " of the donors  
of the stained window, the corpa-  
tion of the furriers of Chartres.



## IV. — THE CHANSON DE ROLAND.

**1. History and Legend. — History.** — Eginhard or Einhard has left us a very succinct account of the historical events which were transformed into legends in the *Chanson de Roland*. Charlemagne was returning from an expedition against the Saracens in the North of Spain. His rear-guard, commanded by the Count of the march of Brittany (French Brittany), Roland or Hroland, was surprised in the valley of Roncevaux by Basque mountaineers. These men, lightly armed and accustomed to fight among rocks and precipices, easily vanquished the heavily armed knights who were strangers to the country. The Franks were surrounded and overwhelmed; and Charlemagne could not revenge himself for this affront (778).

**Legend.** — Roland is made out to be the nephew of Charlemagne (we do not know why), and one of the twelve peers of France. The poem places beside him in the rear-guard, Olivier (whose sister Aude is betrothed to Roland), Archbishop Turpin and the other peers of France. This rear-guard is composed, therefore, of the élite of the Christian barons, to the number of twenty thousand.

It was necessary to supply them with worthy adversaries. How could it be tolerated that Roland, Olivier, Turpin and their heroic companions should be overwhelmed amidst rocks by an ambuscade of obscure and elusive enemies like the Basques? The Franks returning from Spain were therefore attacked at Roncevaux by a hundred thousand Saracens, well armed and very brave. And one must not observe that such armies could not be raised at Roncevaux. In the minds of the Northern trouveres, Roncevaux remained nothing more than gloomy and grandiose scenery, a backdrop, with rocks and pines, set as in a theatre.

One modification led to another. Was it probable that the Saracens would dare to attack this rear-guard, or that the latter should permit itself to be surprised? Then appeared an essentially popular and primitive idea, that of treason. In all literatures, the death of heroes is attributed to the work of a traitor. (It is through treason that Paris kills Achilles, that Hagen kills Siegfried, and Laertes, Hamlet. — Compare historical deaths, almost always attributed by the people to treason or poison.) Charlemagne, who has treated with the Saracen king, Marsile, leaves the country in safety; but Ganelon has prepared, like personal revenge, the death of Roland.

It was not possible, indeed, that such an insult should be passed over without reprisal; and while, in reality, Charlemagne was never able to punish the Basques, we see him in the legend returning to Spain to exterminate the Saracens and punish the traitor Ganelon. Of course, all the details are proportionally enlarged, and there is a surprising sort of logic in this work. The relative



probability of the characters, corresponding with the quality of the heroes, their virtue, the importance of the combat and the beauty of the scenery, seem to have been calculated by a conscious artist, — and the *marvellous* is entirely appropriate.

But what is most striking in the obscure genesis of this, the most beautiful of French chansons, is that the hero succumbs, that his own exalted pride is responsible for his defeat, and that his death is glorified thereby.

**2. Plan and Critical Analysis.** — *Simplicity and Clearness of the Plan.* — The general plan of the *Roland* is simple and easy to comprehend; its clarity is truly French and its construction dramatic. It contains an exposition, a plot and a denouement, — the denouement, it is true, is double and prolonged.

The *exposition* consists of Charlemagne's preparations for departure, and the treason of Ganelon; — the *plot* is the episode where Roland refuses to call Charlemagne to his succour, and wages an unequal battle; — the *denouement* is, first, the death of Roland, then the punishment of the Saracens and the traitor. Not one episode foreign to the action interrupts the *progress* of the development. Though the interviews between Ganelon and Blancandrin and Marsile appear to us too tedious, and the combats of the French and Saracens too long drawn out, yet the subject is never abandoned (1).

**Analysis of the Chanson de Roland.** — For seven years Charlemagne has been in Spain; it only remains for him to conquer Saragossa and King Marsile. Now, Marsile asks for peace, and it is exactly at this moment that the poem begins. Charlemagne summons his barons to discuss the proposals made by the Saracen. After their deliberations, in which the old Duc Naimes, Roland, Olivier, Archbishop Turpin and Ganelon take part, the treaty of peace is accepted in principle; but it is necessary to name an ambassador to accompany the Mussulman envoys and treat directly with Marsile. The mission is a dangerous one: Roland impetuously demands to go. Charlemagne refuses to send him; neither will he send Turpin or Olivier. It is then that, by Roland's advice, the Emperor chooses Ganelon, and Ganelon is furious. On the road to Saragossa, at the side of the Saracen Blancandrin, Ganelon plots his treason; and when he comes into the presence of Marsile, he promises to cause Roland and the other peers to be placed in the rear-guard, so that the Saracens can surprise and massacre at Roncevaux the élite of French chivalry.

After Ganelon's return, Charlemagne goes into France. Roland, with the rear-guard, has penetrated into the defiles of the Pyrenees when he finds himself surrounded by the enemy. Olivier advises him to sound his horn, to summon Charlemagne; three times Roland refuses (2), and the battle begins. After heroic exploits, all the French barons succumb, except Olivier, Turpin and Roland. Roland decides to sound his *olifant*. In the effort his temples break, but the sound reaches the ears of Charlemagne who returns in great haste, after having ordered Ganelon to be put in chains, having understood his villainy too late (3). At Roncevaux Olivier dies; after him, Turpin; at last Roland tries

(1) J. BÉDIER, *Légendes épiques*, III, pp. 183-455.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 12.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 3.

to break his Durandal against the rock, but failing, he lays his sword and his *olifant* under him and dies, his head turned towards Spain, and offering to God his right hand glove (1).

However, Charlemagne has returned, and pursues and exterminates the Saracens while the Deity prolongs the daylight for him. Then he pays the last honours to the barons dead on the plain, and carries away in stag-skins the bodies of Roland, Olivier and Turpin. Returning to Aix-la-Chapelle, the emperor announces to Olivier's sister, Aude, the death of her betrothed, Roland: she falls dead (2). — A council is called to pass judgment upon Ganelon. He is defended in the lists by his relation, Pinabel, against Thierry, who is the champion of Roland. Pinabel is vanquished, and Ganelon, condemned to death, is drawn and quartered. The poem terminates in a dream of Charlemagne's, in which an angel appears and orders him to prepare for a new expedition.

**The Scenery.** — There are three principal scenes: the orchard where Charlemagne holds his council, and which has a smiling and picturesque aspect, with the golden armchair of the emperor, the stairway of blue marble, the cortege of Marsile's envoys, the costumes, etc. It is a sort of colored print or brilliant mosaic. The battle-scene is sinister: "Hauts sont les puys, ténébreuses les vallées, la roche est noire..." Far away, in France, a wonderful tempest breaks forth: "A midi, il y a de grandes ténèbres... C'est le grand deuil pour la mort de Roland!" And when Charlemagne seeks the bodies of his valiant knights, "il trouve le pré rempli d'herbes et de fleurs, qui sont toutes vermeilles du sang de nos barons." Finally, we are at Aix, and here we have no more description; the *trouvere* contents himself with naming the palace where Charlemagne judges Ganelon, and the plain where the two champions fought.

**Variety. Episodes.** — It is unjust to exaggerate the monotony of the episodes. When closely examined, we find that the scenes in the second part have been managed with genuine skill: for instance, when Roland and Olivier perceive in the distance the Saracen army; and, while the innumerable host approaches, the scene of the horn between the two knights, Roland refusing three times to summon Charlemagne to his rescue. And then the battle begins; but this sword-play interest us less, no doubt, than the audiences of the eleventh century. But we must do the *trouvere* the justice to admit that he has sought to give variety, if not to the actual sword-thrusts, at least to the physiognomy and speeches of the adversaries, as attentive reading clearly shows. At last Roland decides to blow his horn; and here we can admire unrestrainedly one of the most beautiful of epic inventions: at the sound of Roland's horn, Charlemagne thrills, but Ganelon reassures him. Then we are taken back to Roncevaux where Roland again sounds the *olifant* "à grande douleur, à grande

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 5.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 16.

angoisse." And the king says: "Ce cor a longue haleine," and he returns, causing all his trumpets to be blown, which answer the horn of Roland, while in the army "il n'en est pas un qui ne pleure et ne sanglote."

But where we are most struck by the variety of the episodes is in the death of the three last survivors of the battle, Olivier, Turpin and Roland.

Olivier is blinded by his blood; and, stunned and faint, he mistakes his friend Roland for a pagan and strikes him; then he begs his pardon, embraces him and dies.

Archbishop Turpin, mortally wounded, summons strength enough to bless the bodies which Roland has laid before him; and then, seeing Roland swoon, he drags himself to the brook to fill the olifant with water; but in this last effort he dies, and Roland, coming to himself, finds only his dead body.

Finally, it is Roland's turn. If we were not reading the work of an old anonymous *trouvère*, writing in a language which the French have decided, through singular laziness, to regard as infantile and barbarous, there would be but one opinion upon the supreme beauty of this passage. In the first place, the scene is prepared by the surest method. One by one the companions of Roland have fallen; he, the hero, survives them all. When he was fighting amongst his comrades, we admired his strength and courage; but now he seems still more heroic, for we feel that only



STATUE OF ROLAND

Work of the XIII century, sculptured on the portal of Verona Cathedral.



STATUE OF OLIVIER

Work of the XIII century, sculptured on the portal of Verona Cathedral.

his superior will power keeps life in his exhausted and bleeding body. However, the pagans have not given him any mortal thrust. There is a hole in his helmet made by the sword of Olivier. He has but one *open wound*, the broken temples caused by the desperate appeal of his olifant to Charlemagne.

over the mountains; but through this breach his blood is flowing, and his last hour is near. We do not find, in any ancient epic, French or other, a scene equal to this one: a hero who dies unvanquished, alone, his face turned towards his terrified enemies, one hand extended to God, the other resting on his faithful sword, whose exploits he recalls three times with melancholy pride, while he perceives in the distance, in the midst of his death agony, the sure and formidable approach of his avenger.

**3. The Characters.** — An attempt has been made, in some school-books, by a kind of sophistry, to establish a regular comparison between the characters in the *Iliad* and those in the *Chanson de Roland*. This comparison is legitimate only if we wish to note certain curious analogies between two early epics, which were conceived in two entirely opposite psychological and social moments. Roland, without doubt, resembles Achilles in the sense that both of them incarnate *excessive* valiance; and Olivier may be compared with Hector of Troy, because like him his courage, based on reason, and his prudence, which is not weakness, may be contrasted with the headlong and rash type of bravery. But, carried any further, the parallel becomes artificial to the point of being ridiculous. Duke Naimes, furthermore, might be the Nestor of our epic; but what must be said of those who set face to face Charlemagne and Agamemnon, Archbishop Turpin and the soothsayer Chalcas?

**Roland.** — Roland possesses beauty (1); prodigious physical strength (2); courage equal to his strength (3); he is loyal to his king (4); but he is proud, and by his *inordinate pride* he is responsible for the disaster (5). Neither his courage nor his pride prevents his being *compassionate*; he loves Olivier (6); he can weep and sigh (7); he is pious, and does not forget, when dying, to acknowledge his sin (8). This character, then, is not rigid; it is not of Roland one can say, "Et rien d'humain ne bat sous cette bonne armure." He is "ni tout à fait bon, ni tout à fait méchant," as Aristotle requires the hero of tragedy to be. When we study his character without prejudice, we find it more or less complex, so far as circumstances permitted. — M. J. Bédier writes: "In this poem, Roland and his companions, so far from being the slaves of their destiny, are on the contrary its artisans and masters, as much as any characters of Corneille. It is their own characters which evoke and determine the drama and better still, it is character of Roland alone. (*Légendes épiques*, III, 411.)

(1) We refer to the numbers of the stanzas, edition L. Gautier. It is an excellent exercise for students to look up these citations themselves and get from them a *portrait* of Roland, Olivier, etc. *Laisse* XCV.

(2) CXXXVII et passim. — (3) XCI, CLXV, CLXVII, CLXXXIII, etc. — (4) XCH, XCIII. —

(5) XIV, XVIII, LXI, LXV, LXXXVII and following. — (6) CLXXII, CLXXXIII, CLXXXIX, CXC, etc. — (7) CCIII. — (8) CCII, CCIII.



**Olivier.** — “*Roland est preux, mais Olivier est sage.*” The character of Olivier is consistent throughout the poem. He is wise in Charlemagne’s council (1); wise before the battle (2); when he asks Roland to blow his horn (3); and when he rallies Roland for deciding too late to obey him (4); his friendship is sincere and frank (5); his bravery in battle equal to Roland’s (6).

**Charlemagne.** — Charlemagne, who in 778 was only thirty-seven years old, is represented in the *Roland* as an ancestor: “*Il a la barbe blanche et le chef tout fleuri*” (7); this beard he sometimes invokes (8), sometimes spreads over his cuirass (9), sometimes pulls and tears in sign of grief (10); Marsile has a sort of superstitious terror of Charlemagne, believing him two hundred years old (11). The great emperor consults his barons (12), not to let them dictate to him, but to enlighten himself. He is ever present in the minds of the combatants at Roncevaux (13), and especially is he invoked by the dying (see the death of Roland) (14). Charlemagne loves his knights as much as they love him: note his anguish when he hears the horn of Roland (15), his grief when he comes upon the bodies of his barons (16), his indignation when he is asked to pardon the traitor Ganelon (17). He is not less brave than Roland, and strikes hard in battle (18). But in the midst of all these knights who seem to have no other function than to cleave in twain their enemies, and who, when the combat is over, yield themselves to repose, the emperor represents the supreme chief who, in the intervals of action, thinks and foresees: he is not only an arm, but a brain as well. His sleep is agitated, he has dreams (19), and the angels of God talk with him.



THE DEATH OF ROLAND

From a miniature of the end of the xiv century in a manuscript of the *Grandes Chroniques de France*.

(4) XVIII. — (2) LXXXIV, LXXXV — (3) LXXXVII to XCII, and XCVI. — (4) CL to CLIV. — (5) XVIII, CLXXI to CLXXV. — (6) CX, CXI, CXXX, CXLIII, CXLVII, etc. — (7) VIII. — (8) XVII. — (9) CLXI, CCLIV. — (10) CCIV, CCXLI, CCXVIII. — (11) XLII, XLIII, XLIV. — (12) VIII to XXVII and CCXVIII to CCCIV. — (13) XC, XCI, XCIII, XCIV, etc. — (14) CXCVIII to CCIII. — (15) CLV to CLXI — (16) CCXXI to CCXL. — (17) CCCHII, CCCIV. — (18) CCLXVI to CCXCH. — (19) CCXI to CCXIII.

**Turpin.** — The character of Archbishop Turpin, also, is coherent, lifelike and very distinct from the others. Priest and soldier, his originality consists in his never forgetting that he is both one and the other. After giving the French his blessing (1), he fights like a valorous knight (2); hearing the dispute between Roland and Olivier, he separates them and speaks sensibly to them (3); mortally wounded, he nevertheless fights on (4), and is the last to continue in the combat beside Roland. His death is that of a priest: he blesses the bodies brought together by Roland (5), he endeavours to succour the swooning hero, and dies in this charitable effort.

**Ganelon.** — Ganelon is far from being an ordinary character. He is portrayed in the beginning as a fine and brave knight (6); to Marsile he defends Charlemagne's claims at the risk of his life (7), and even when he appears before the council which sits in judgment upon his treason, his mine is that of a true knight (8). But he is represented as vindictive and jealous (9), and here lies the explanation of his treason.

**Aude.** — Aude is Olivier's sister, and the fiancée of Roland (see *Girard de Vienne*). The poet must be praised for attributing to her such noble and reserved grief. She too dies as she should die (10).

**4. The Marvellous.** — Every epic, because of the grandeur of its exploits, and their remoteness, admits the intervention of the marvellous. While popular imagination exaggerates the situations and actions, at the same time it feels, by a secret sense of logic, that human power alone would not be equal to such a task. It is not satisfied merely to render the hero invulnerable (Achilles, Siegfried), but brings divinity to his aid. The marvellous of the *Chanson de Roland* is entirely Christian, without any intermixture of popular superstition or magic; rather, it is *supernatural*. But there is only a *minimum* of this element. The poet tells us that God fights on the side of France, and that the devil, with Apollon and Tervagant, is on the side of the Saracens. But neither God nor the devil plays any direct role in the battle: they remain merely *subjective*. The only apparitions are those of Saint Gabriel and Saint Michael when they come to receive the soul of Roland (11). Twice again Saint Gabriel appears to Charlemagne, but only in dreams (12). Thus we may see the restraint of the *marvellous* here.

**5. Language and Style.** — The best text which we possess of the *Chanson de Roland* is the Oxford MS, the work of an Anglo-Norman scribe which Léon

(1) XCIII, XCIV. — (2) CXXXIV, CXLII. — (3) CLIII. — (4) CLXXIX, CLXXX. — (5) CLXXXVII to CXC. — (6) CXCI to CXCV. — (7) XX. — (8) XXXII to XXXIII. — (9) CCG — (10) XV, XX to XXVI. — (11) CCH. — (12) CCXII and CCXVIII

Gautier dates between 1150 and 1160. It is a poor copy, as badly corrected as it is badly written. The original manuscript must have been written in Norman dialect, with the study of which we are not concerned in this place. Let it be remembered only that the *Romance* of the eleventh and twelfth centuries is a language with two cases, in which the Latin basis is still very evident, and where the Germanic influence only appears in the words themselves. The syntax is rigid and lacks variety, and that is the real defect of this language, whose vocabulary is not so poor as the ignorant affirm; *Formulas* are frequently used in the narratives and descriptions; they supplement *images*, which are very rare. Evidently, the poetry of the *Roland* lies in the situations and the sentiments, hardly at all in the form. We are accustomed, by our classical education, to having the poets supply us with poetry which is all complete, ornamented with *figures* which fill of themselves our lazy imaginations. And in this connection, romanticism has rendered us still more passive: we love *poets* and *artists*, we do not love either poetry or the arts. Perhaps our ancestors felt more keenly than we do the poetry in things: a bare and rapid indication was sufficient to suggest a situation or an emotion to their fresher imagination.

## V. — DIFFUSION AND INFLUENCE OF THE CHANSONS DE GESTE.

Though our *chansons de geste* are of Germanic origin, it was surely upon Gallo-Roman soil that they took their definitive form, and under this form exercised a truly European influence (1).

France, only, seems to have forgotten for more than three centuries, from Ronsard to Victor Hugo, poems whose value had been proved by their diffusion

(1) Germany translated *Roland* and *Aliscans* (XII and XV centuries); England preferred above all *Fiérabaz*; in the Low Countries in the twelfth century, *Roncevaux*: *Renaud*, *Les Lorrains* are so many adaptations of the French poems; in Norway, in the thirteenth century, we find a collection of *Sagas* (*a*) of which the most famous is the *Karlamagnus-Saga*, itself translated into Swedish and Danish; Spain is given to *romances*, whose subjects are often drawn from French epics.

Italy, of all the neighboring countries, was the one where French subjects met with the greatest success. Transported into this lively and curious society, the French chansons were first of all, in Lombardy and Venitia, circulated in *Italianised French*. Then, at the close of the fourteenth century, a compilation was made of French epic legends under the title of *Royaume de France* (*Real di Francia*). This immense work was followed by other poems, the *Entrée de Spagne*, *Aspremont*, *Rinaldo*, etc.

Long editions in prose and verse were made of Guillaume d'Orange and Ogier the Dane. These successes continued. At the end of the fifteenth century, Pulci and Bojardo, in the sixteenth, Ariosto, and to a certain degree Tasso, continued to exploit French *gestes*, each after his own fashion. Even now it is in Italy that Roland, Olivier, Ogier, Renaud, etc., are most celebrated.

(a) The word *Saga* (legend) is applied in Scandinavian literatures, on one hand to national Icelandic poems, in prose; on the other hand, to imitations or adaptations of French epics and romances of French Brittany.

throughout all Europe. Now at last we may speak of the *chansons de geste* as of classic works, without being obliged to seem disdainful of a literature so essentially national. But we must guard against a contrary excess. Let us constantly admit two things: First, that in the inspiration of the first French trouveres, the sense of proportion and equilibrium which characterises the true artist is missing (perhaps because the greater part of these *chansons* have come to us in the form of unskilful rehandlings), — secondly, that their language, robust and precise though it is, and already truly French in its clarity, has not yet acquired the necessary suppleness for the expression of intimate sentiment or for variegated description of the external world.

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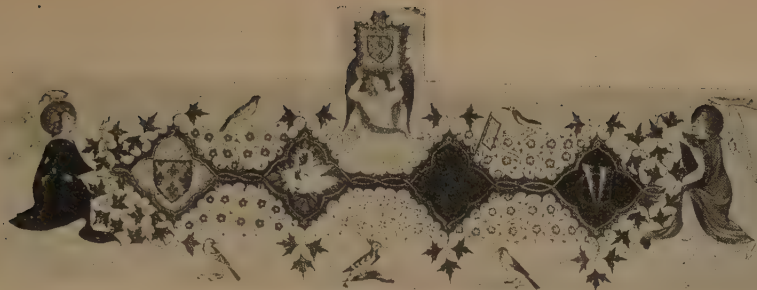
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For complete texts, independent of the extracts cited in different *Chrestomathies*:

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THE CHRESTOMATHIES refer readers to the separate or collective editions of the other *Chansons de geste*.





TWO JUGGLERS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE XIV CENTURY  
From the manuscript of *Grandes Heures of the Duke de Berry*.

### CHAPTER III.

## COURTLY LITERATURE.

### THE ROMANCES OF THE ROUND TABLE.

### THE ROMANCES OF ADVENTURE.

#### SUMMARY.

**THE ROMANCE** is opposed to the *chanson de geste* in that it is the narrative of a more or less fictitious adventure. — We here enter upon the *literature*, properly speaking, of invention and imitation, which depicts *courteous* love.

1. **THE ROMANCES OF THE ROUND TABLE** originated in Celtic traditions of King Arthur and his knights. To these were joined the legend of the *Graal*, the vessel in which Joseph of Arimathea caught the blood of Christ. These Breton stories first passed into France in the XII century under the form of *lais*, the most celebrated of which are those of Marie de France. — *Tristan et Yseult* must be placed apart. — **CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES** (died 1195) was the author of the most famous romances of adventure, among others, *Le Chevalier au lion*, *Lancelot* and *Perceval*.

2. **OTHER ROMANCES** were imitated from Greco-Byzantine works (*Les Sept Sages*), or drawn from old French legends (*Robert le Diable*, *Jean de Paris*). With these is connected the song-fable, *Aucassin et Nicolette*.

3. **THESE ROMANCES SPREAD THROUGHOUT EUROPE.** They were imitated in Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and in Spain (where they form the library of *Don Quixote*), and whence they returned to France in a compilation by **HERBERAY DE SESSARTS**, under the title of *Amadis* (XVI cent.)



DECORATED LETTER  
from a manuscript of the  
X century.

THE word *romance* signified originally a narrative in verse, and in popular language; it was a work of imitation or of invention. The *romance* is distinguished from the *chanson de geste* by the fact that the *chanson* always had, or claimed to have, an historical foundation.

Here we begin to deal with *literature*, properly so called. It is no longer a question of works whose roots sprang from ancient national and religious foundations, and from the soul of the people impassioned by genuine exploits. The *romans bretons* and the *romans d'aventures* were written by *learned authors*, who drew their inspiration from foreign fables.

It was the first time, but not the last, that French literature borrowed plots, types and even a style from a neighbouring literature; and that, in *transposing* its imitations, it, so to speak, *delocalised* them, and generalised them to the point of making them *cosmopolitan*.

These romances are characterised by *courteous* love in contradistinction to the *feudal* sentiments of the *chansons de geste*. While the *chansons* sing of war against the infidel, or the struggles between great vassals, the romances narrate the adventures of knights who, sometimes in obedience to their *ladies*, sometimes to accomplish a vow, perform exploits as marvellous as they are unprofitable. This conception of love, before which everything must give way, and which is "*plus fort que la mort*", seems to have been of Celtic origin, that is to say, Breton or Welsh. But it became over-subtle under the influence of the imitators of Ovid, authors of different *Arts d'amour*. André le Chapelain (XIII century) wrote in Latin a *De Arte honeste amandi* which contains, according to G. Paris "the most complete code of courteous love as it is seen in action in the romances of the Round Table (4)".

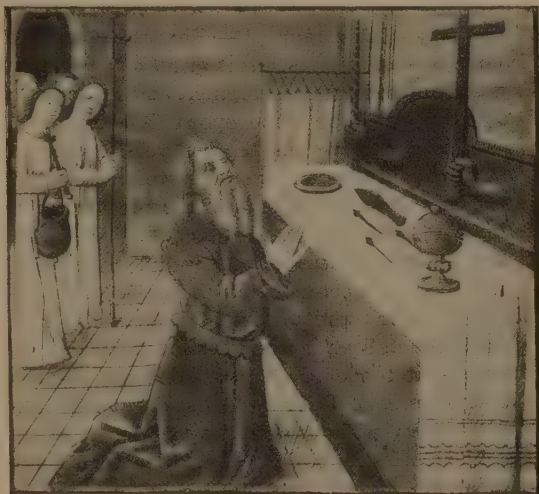
## I. — THE ROMANCES OF THE ROUND TABLE.

**Sources. Arthurian Legends.** — The struggles of the Celts of Great Britain against the Saxons in the fifth and sixth centuries had inspired, in the tenth century, the Latin chronicle of Nennius, in which Arthur appeared for the first time.

This chronicle was expanded and completed, at the beginning of the twelfth century, by Gaufréy or Jofroy (born at Monmouth, died in 1154), in his *Historia regum Britanniæ*. This work helped to spread the legends of Arthur and

(4) G. PARIS. *Littérature française au moyen âge*, § 104.

Merlin, already known in Saxon and Norman society by the numerous narratives or *lays* of the Welsh bards. Arthur, who was only the chief of a clan, is represented as a king who had long been victorious over the enemies of Great Britain, whose knights, the bravest and most courteous of all Christendom, sat at a *round table* in order to avoid quarrels about precedence. Arthur is at length mortally wounded in battle, and disappears, but his followers claim that he has been carried to the Isle of Avalon, to stay among the blessed, whence some day he will return (Cf. the legend of Frederick Barbarossa). The *Historia regum Britannie* of Gaufrey de Monmouth, and the adaptation of this work in verse, under the title of *Brut* (1155), by Robert Wace (1), met with even more success in France because, on one hand, the recent conquest of England by the Normans (1066) seemed to have opened a new source of inspiration, and because, on the other hand, Gaufrey and Wace had already transformed the rough and barbarous companions of Arthur into knights of perfect *chivalry*.



“ HOW JOSEPH OF ARIMATEA KNELT DOWN BEFORE THE HOLY GRAIL, THE HOLY LANCE AND THE HOLY NAILS. ”

From a miniature of the xv century, in a manuscript of *Joseph d'Armatheie* by Robert de Boron.

### Legends of the Holy Grail. —

The legend of the Holy Grail was connected from very early times with the *Arthurian* legends, properly so called. The *Grail* was supposed to be the vessel in which Joseph of Arimathea caught the blood of Christ; and this vessel was confused with the one used at the Lord's Supper and that in which Pilate washed his hands. The body of Joseph of Arimathea having been brought back from the East by Charlemagne, given by him to the Abbey of Moyencmoustier, in the Vosges, and afterwards carried over into England, the history was invented, after the event, of the pretended journeys of Joseph of Arimathea and the *Grail*. The *Grail* was lost, and could only be found by a

(1) *Brut*, because Brutus was considered the *Patron* hero of the Bretons.

knight whose heart was pure; and Perceval was the most illustrious of the knights who set forth in search of it.

**Mythology.** — At length, the enchanter Merlin, first introduced by Gaufrey, after Nennius, plays an important role in several of these romances; in them he represents, with the fairies, an ancient mythology very difficult to reconstruct, and which the authors of the *lays* or of the romances did not understand either.

**The Lays** (XII century). — The romances of the Round Table were drawn from *lays*, short poems, a sort of *tales in verse*, sung by the Welsh bards. These lays were translated into French; and those which we possess were almost contemporary with the same epoch (XII century) in which Chrétien de Troyes wrote his *romances*. But the first versions must have appeared earlier.

Of the twenty Breton lays preserved to us, fifteen were composed by a woman, Marie, who lived in England in the twelfth century, but was born in France and is known as **MARIE DE FRANCE**. The most celebrated are: *Yonec*, the subject of which has become popular under the title of *L'Oiseau bleu*, which shows a genuine art in composition and description; — *Lanval*, in which a knight is loved by a fairy who carries him off with her to the Isle of Avalon; — *Eliduc*, a dramatic and psychological tale, in which the fatality of love and feminine devotion are rendered with rare delicacy; — *Le Chèvrefeuille*, which relates to the adventures of Tristan and Yseult, etc. (1).

These *tales*, without doubt, by reason of their *fairy marvellous*, are more or less like stories for children; but their depiction of love brings them into a just comparison with our best psychological novels. The love which, with Chrétien de Troyes, becomes refined gallantry, almost *affectation*, is in certain of these *lays* — especially *Eliduc* and *Le Chèvrefeuille* — a profound emotion, melancholy, painful, exalted to madness even to the absolute sacrifice of self. This sentiment originated in the mystical and dreaming brains of the country of Wales. Some of its traits survive in the romances of the Round Table, but broken and intermingled with too worldly sentiments, forming a whole which is nearly incoherent and soon becomes ridiculous. In its purest form it must be sought, therefore, in the *lays* themselves.

**Tristan and Yseult.** — We also find this love *plus fort que la vie et que la mort*, in the legend of *Tristan*; and it should be considered separately, outside the group formed by the romances of the Round Table (2).

(1) L. CLÉDAT has given an analysis of these *Lays*, with numerous quotations, in the *Histoire de la Littérature française* (Jullien-Colin, 1896), t. I., p. 285. We shall return to Marie de France in our chapter on the *Fable*.

(2) There are two French romances in verse about Tristan, that of Bérout, composed about 1150,



Tristan, prince de Léonois, and nephew of Marc, King of Cornwall, delivers this country from a monster, the Morhout, who comes each year to demand tribute of young men and maidens (Cf. the Greek legend of Theseus and the Minotaur). Victorious, but wounded by the poisoned sword of the Morhout, Tristan enters a bark without sails or rudder, and drifts to Ireland, where he is cured by the queen. (This queen is the mother of Yseult; some versions say that Tristan is cured by Yseult herself.) Later, Tristan comes back again to Ireland, whither he is sent to bring the Princess Yseult to King Marc, who is going to marry her. On the ship which is bringing them from Ireland to Cornwall, Tristan and Yseult drink by mistake a philter which was intended to bind Yseult and Marc together in an unchangeable love. From this results a guilty and fatal passion. The rest of the story presents numerous episodes in which this passion causes misery to the three persons involved.

Different authors give different denouements. According to some, the effect of the philter being limited to three years, Tristan and Yseult cease to love each other; according to others, they are both killed by King Marc.

The most interesting and most celebrated denouement is that of Thomas. In this, Tristan leaves Cornwall for Brittany and marries there another Yseult, *Yseult aux blanches mains*, trying, but in vain, to forget *Yseult la blonde*, who, for her part, never ceases to think of Tristan.

Tristan being wounded by a poisoned weapon can only be cured by Yseult of Cornwall. They send for her, at the instigation of his wife, who tells the messenger to show a white sail if he is bringing Yseult, and a black one if the queen refuses to come. (Cf. again the legend of Theseus and Egeus.) The messenger, Kaherdin, succeeds in his mission, and Yseult returns with him. Tristan, lying on his bed, waits with anxiety the return of the ship, which, though almost in sight, is for five days tossed by a tempest and then withheld by a calm. Tristan's wife, who has discovered his secret, watches from her window the arrival of the ship. She sees its



TRISTAN DE LÉONOIS AND HIS UNCLE, KING MARK

« How the King was in his tent, and there came adamsel who recounted to Tristan a great amount of mischief about the wife (of) Segurades whom Blioberis led away. »

*From a miniature of the end of the XIV century, which does not give one of the original texts of the romance, but of a very complete later version.*

and that of Thomas about 1170. Finally, Chrétien de Troyes composed a *Tristan*, no version of which has survived. Richard Wagner based the libretto of his opera *Tristan and Isolde* from the work of Thomas.

white sail flapping in the wind, but, through jealousy, she tells Tristan that the sail is black. Then Tristan, who can no longer sustain his strength, dies of grief. Yseult, arriving too late, dies at his side (1).

**CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES** (died 1195). — Of all the poets who exploited and adapted for French taste the *matière de Bretagne*, the most famous is *Chrétien de Troyes*. Scarcely anything is known of his life. He had for protectress and inspirer another Marie de France, wife of Comte Henri I de Champagne, daughter of Louis VII and Aliénor de Guienne. It is possible that Marie knew, through her mother, who became queen of England in 1154, Welsh or Anglo-Norman *lays* and *romances* which she communicated to the French poet. We know that Chrétien owed to her the subject of the *Chevalier à la Charrette*; we also know that he wrote his *Perceval* after an original furnished him by the Comte de Flandre, Philippe d'Alsace, who had sojourned in England.

Not all the works of Chrétien have survived to our time.

After *Tristan* (about 1160), he wrote *Erec*, *Cligès*, *Lancelot* or *Le Chevalier à la Charrette* (about 1170), *Yvain* of *Le Chevalier au Lion*, and *Perceval* (about 1175). This last romance remains unfinished, interrupted perhaps by the death of the author. Following is a brief analysis of the three principal poems:

**Le Chevalier au Lion.** — This is a genuine *Arthurian* romance. There is a sort of prologue in which several knights, assembled at Arthur's court, relate their exploits. Following the indications of one of them, Yvain goes to the forest of *Brocéliande*, where he discovers a fountain sheltered by a pine-tree and surrounded by circular emerald steps. He takes some of the water in a golden cup suspended to the pine-tree and sprinkles it on the ground (2). Immediately a dreadful storm begins. A knight appears and attacks him. Yvain resists valiantly, wounds him fatally and pursues him to his castle, where Yvain enters and hides himself. He attends the knight's funeral, perceives his widow and falls in love with her. Thanks to a confidant of the lady, who is a genuine soubrette type for a comedy, he succeeds in approaching the lady and marrying her. — Chrétien has treated with refined art, full of wit and with a sure touch, the interviews between Yvain and the lady (3). — Before long, King Arthur, followed by his barons, arrives at the fountain; Yvain receives them hospitably at his castle; then, anxious to accomplish new exploits, he leaves his wife for a year. When he returns the year is overpast, and he is refused entrance into his castle. Then, in despair, he gives himself to mad adventures. In one of these he rescues a lion from a serpent which had entwined itself around the Beast. The grateful lion attaches itself to its rescuer, and hence his title of the Knight of the Lion. Finally, his valour wins him forgiveness.

**Lancelot ou Le Chevalier à la Charrette.** — This romance is much too rich in episodes, but was not written entirely by Chrétien, who commissioned Godefroy de Lagni to finish it. — It owes its title to the following facts: One of the knights of King Arthur's court, Lancelot (who is not mentioned until late in the poem, in order to pique the reader's curiosity), sets forth in search of Queen Guinevere, the wife of Arthur, who has been carried off by Méléagant, son of Bademagne, "king of the country whence no

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 11.

(2) Read, in the *Chrestomathie* of M. CLÉDAT, p. 142, the passage on the *fontaine merveilleuse*.

(3) Read, *Chrestomathie* of G. PARIS, p. 95, that long and charming scene.

one returned." On the road, Lancelot loses his horse, and, not to delay his pursuit, he agrees to get into a cart driven by a dwarf, this being a sort of dishonour to which he voluntarily submits the better to serve his lady. We have in this an essential trait of chivalric love. — Lancelot crosses the perilous bridge, cutting it like a thread with his sword. After several episodes, he rescues the queen, for love of whom he again consents to humiliate himself, this time in a tournament, until she shall authorise him to take his revenge. — Lancelot is the most perfect type of the knight. No less famous was Gawain, nephew of Arthur, who was a model of bravery and disinterested fidelity, and who plays an important role in the poem. With them, the seneschal Keu, also very brave, is sometimes the centre of almost comic situations. *Le Chevalier à la Charrette* was rewritten in prose under the title of *Lancelot* (1220), and had, until the sixteenth century, a European reputation (1).

**Perceval.** — The father and two elder brothers of the young Perceval having been killed in tournaments, his mother tries to avoid the fatal destiny which seems to menace the family by retiring with her child to a castle hidden in the midst of a vast forest; she hopes that this son may thus escape the seductions of Chivalry. But Perceval, wandering in the forest, falls in with some knights and talks with them; and, despite the protests of his mother, he goes off. He reaches the castle of the *roi pêcheur*, where he sees the Grail. It seems that, should he ask a question about the mysterious vessel, the enchantment would be broken; but he remains silent. — Chrétien's work ends here (2).



EPISODE FROM THE ROMANCE OF LANCELOT DU LAC

"How Lancelot was released from the dance he could not leave off because of enchantment and magic art, and how a gold crown was placed on his head, and he was seated on a chair, and how he saw the profile of an image resembling the king falling down from on high."

From a miniature of the end of the XIII century, taken from a rehandled version posterior to the work of Chrétien de Troyes.

The legend of *Perceval* has been completed by a great number of poets, and in their different endings, the Grail becomes the vessel in which Joseph of Arimathea caught the blood of Christ. At the same period, Robert de Boron composed three connected poems: *Joseph d'Arimathe*, *Merlin*, *Perceval*. Then, under the title of *La Quête du Saint-Graal* (attributed to Robert de Boron, and

(1) See the episode of Francesca da Rimini in DANTE's *Divina Comedia*. *Inferno*, Canto V.

(2) Read in the *Récits extraits des poètes et prosateurs du moyen âge* of G. PARIS, the interview between the young Perceval and the knights he meets in the forest.

of which the French text is lost), we have a narrative of the adventures of Galahad, son of Lancelot, who replaces Perceval in his mission (1).

## II. — ROMANCES OF ADVENTURE.

It was not only from Brittany that the Middle Ages borrowed subjects and heroes of romance. Material was taken from the most divers sources, especially (above all after the Crusades), from Byzantine sources. Many ancient local traditions were borrowed also : and often subjects were invented.

We shall only be able to enumerate here a very small number of romances. It suffices to note that their production from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries was extraordinarily great ; yet we have only preserved a part of these works.

Let us consider first the **Roman des Sept Sages**, of Indian origin.

The Emperor Vespasian has a son, whom his cruel stepmother wishes to destroy. The young prince cannot vindicate himself because the seven sages, to whom the emperor has entrusted his education, have read in the stars that the prince would perish if he should pronounce a single word during the first seven days after his arrival at the palace of his father. Therefore, to entertain Vespasian, and pass the time until the prince may speak and prove his innocence, each of the seven sages relates a story.

And, on the eighth day, it is the queen, the cruel stepmother, who is condemned to be burned alive.

**Floire et Blanchefleur.** — Floire, son of a pagan king, loves Blanchefleur, daughter of a Christian captive. The king wishes his son to believe that Blanchefleur is dead, and shows him the tomb which he has ordered to be made for her. But Floire opens the tomb, finds it empty and goes in search of Blanchefleur, whom he finds, after many romantic adventures, in the palace of the Sultan of Babylon. He marries her. Their daughter, Berte aux Grands Pieds, was later to become the mother of Charlemagne (2).

**Parténopeus de Blois** is a new adaptation (XII century) of the famous Psyche myth. In this it is not a woman's but a man's curiosity which is punished by the loss of a mysterious privilege.

The romances just cited are sentimental and imaginative works, their background being more or less historical according to the descriptions and the details of costumes. More nearly historical (but without possessing either exactitude or probability) are **La Châtelaine de Vergy** (XIII century), **Robert le Diable** (*Id.*), etc. This production continued without interruption during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a period to which belong **Le Petit Jehan de Saintré**, by ANTOINE DE LA SALLE, and above all **Jean de Paris**.

(1) A German poet, Wolfram d'Eschenbach (died 1230), has also left us a *Perceval* ; Richard Wagner took his *Parsifal* from this.

(2) With *Floire et Blanchefleur*, cf. *Chrestomathie* of M. CLÉDAT, p. 56. — With *Les Sept Sages*, same work, p. 219.



**Jean de Paris.** — Jean, son of the King of France, goes to Spain to marry the Infanta Anne, to whom he has been betrothed by his father. On the way he meets the King of England, who is also a pretender to the hand of the princess. Jean pretends to be a rich bourgeois of Paris, and astounds his rival by his luxury and wit. Reaching Burgos, he makes a brilliant entry into the city, charms the King of Spain and all the court, ends by declaring his true identity and recalling the promises made to his father, and marries the infanta (1).

We must note here a short romance written half in prose, half in verse, a *song-fable* called *Aucassin et Nicolette* (second half of the XII century).

**Aucassin et Nicolette.** — Nicolette is a young Saracen captive, recognised in the denouement as the daughter of the King of Carthage. She is beloved by Aucassin, son of the Comte Garin de Beaucaire. The Count objects to their love, and has his son and Nicolette imprisoned in dungeons; but the maiden escapes and takes refuge in the neighbouring forest. There she meets some shepherds whom she asks to warn Aucassin. The count, after the disappearance of Nicolette, liberates his son; Aucassin mounts his horse, rides to the forest, finds the shepherds there, who tell him about Nicolette, and he seeks her everywhere. He meets a poor serf, a hideous man, who is weeping for a lost ox, and a dialogue follows in a style of simple and admirable realism which contrasts with the prettiness of the other episodes—like the scene of the *Pauvre* in Moliere's *Don Juan*. At last, Aucassin and Nicolette meet, and after several adventures they are able to get married. — This delicious *song-fable*, the only specimen of a genre which must have been very much liked in the Middle Ages, is without doubt of oriental origin, and probably was brought to us by the Spanish Arabs (2).

### III. — DIFFUSION AND INFLUENCE OF THE ROMANCES.

Like the French *chansons de geste*, the French romances were circulated throughout Europe, and gave rise in every country to imitations. We have already mentioned *Parsifal*, and must include also the Norwegian and English versions of *Tristan*. The *Chevalier au Lion*, by Chrétien, was translated into German; and we find Dutch and German adaptations of *Lancelot*. In Italy, in 1270 (3), an epitome was made of all these romances, which helped to popularize them in that country. We are therefore less surprised to find Ariosto mingling with his imitations of the *Chansons de geste*, those of the romances of the Round Table and of the romances of adventure. In Spain, there was the same diffusion of our narrative literature, which resulted in the celebrated *Amadis de Gaule* and the romances which followed it: *Esplandian*, *Flo-risel*, etc., works which Cervantes mentions as forming the library of Don

(1) Read, in the *Recits extraits des poètes et prosateurs du moyen âge*, de GASTON PARIS, p. 73, a very interesting selection from *Jean de Paris*. — Concerning these mediæval romances, see G. PARIS, *Littérature française au moyen âge*, §§ 50, 51, 52, and 65 to 71.

(2) G. MICHAUT, *Aucassin et Nicolette*, préface by J. BÉDIER. Paris, Fontemoing, 1910. — *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 28. *Chrestomathie* of G. PARIS, p. 130.

(3) Rusticien de Pise

Quixote. The *Amadis* returned into France in the sixteenth century, by the celebrated translation of **HERBERAY DES ESSARTS** (6 vol. in-folio, 1540-1556), which gave to chivalric literature renewed popularity. As late as in *Le Grand Cyrus* of Mlle de Scudéry, and in the *Cléopâtre* of La Calprenède, we feel the influence of *Amadis*, combined with that of the travestied romances of antiquity, of which we shall soon speak.

The romance, then, has always existed in France. In all ages, in every class of society, during the most serious political events, these fictions have always found innumerable readers. And doubtless, as it is to-day, women especially sought in them a diversion from the realities of life, and food for their insatiable curiosity.

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THE VIRGIN

From a miniature in a manuscript of the end of the xiv century



PAGE ORNAMENT, FROM A MANUSCRIPT OF THE BEGINNING OF THE XIV CENTURY

## CHAPTER IV.

### LEARNED AND ALLEGORICAL LITERATURE.

#### THE ROMANCES OF ANTIQUITY.

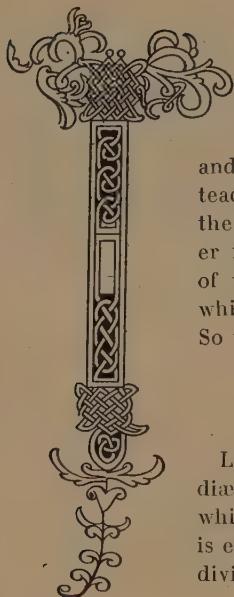
#### DIDACTIC AND MORAL POEMS.

#### SUMMARY

1. The educated trouveres, the clerics, search antiquity to find new subjects for their **romances**. But they do not imitate the original works of the ancients: they select subjects from the Greco-Byzantine compilations. — The most celebrated works of this kind are : *Le Roman d'Alexandre*, *Le Roman de Troie*, *Le Roman de Thèbes*. The heroes are **knights**; there is no local colour.

2. **OF THE ALLEGORICAL POEMS**, the masterpiece is *Le Roman de la Rose*, written by two authors: **G. DE LORRIS** composed the first part about 1230; **JEAN DE MEUN**, the second about 1277. The story of the young knight who desires to pick a rose, and is prevented by Allegories representing Sentiments, is transformed in the second part into a social satire. This **romance** met with great success; Marot published in the sixteenth century an edition brought up to date.

3. All sorts of didactic treatises were published in the Middle Ages: *Bestiaires*, *Lapidaires*, *Image du Monde*, etc. ; and also numerous short pieces in which satire predominated, as *Le Dit des Jacobins*, *Le Dit des Cordeliers*, etc. No other epoch has shown so much taste for didactic poetry.



DECORATED LETTER  
from a manuscript of  
the IX century.

In this chapter we place those works which were inspired by antiquity as it was understood by the Middle Ages, and written by the *clercs*: pseudo-Greek and pseudo-Latin epics, imitations of the *Ars Amatoria* of Ovid, and especially *Le Roman de la Rose*; also short and long *didactic* poems, that is, those whose object was to teach or sum up any branch of knowledge. This is one of the most thankless sections of mediæval literature, no longer interesting except from the critical and historical point of view in so far as it reflects a state of mind and heart, which has been profoundly modified since the Renaissance. So we shall sum it up briefly.

## I. — THE ROMANCES OF ANTIQUITY.

Let us remember that a conventional classification of mediæval epics places the antique romances in a *third cycle* (of which the first two are those of France and Brittany), which is entitled, *Cycle of Troy* or of *Rome la Grant*. This is the division made by Jean Bodel in the thirteenth century:

“ Ne sont que trois matières à nul homme entendant,  
De France, de Bretagne et de Rome la Grant. ”

But we have pointed out, and we repeat, that this classification is as inexact as possible. There are no *epics* except the *chansons de geste*; the subject matter of Brittany and of antiquity has only resulted in *romances* (1).

**Origin and nature of the antique romances.** — The *trouvères*, at least until the eleventh century, found their inspiration in historical and religious national traditions. Their *chansons*, continually developed and rehandled, were less interesting in their depiction of manners and passions than their narration of *adventures*, which gathered more mystery and grandeur as they receded into the past.

Now, the *clercs* possessed knowledge of a whole mine of adventures still more remote, and capable of piquing the curiosity of audiences by the novelty of the countries, the heroes and the situations: this was the Greek and Latin epics. But they did not translate them accurately, they did not even directly imitate Homer, Virgil, Statius, or historians like Quintus Curtius. The works of antiquity had undergone, in Greco-Byzantine society, singular adaptations

(1) See definition of the word *romance*, p. 56.



and transpositions, and it was from these that the mediæval clerics drew their supplies. Neither must we expect to find any local colour. Already transformed at Alexandria and Byzance, these antique heroes became in the thirteenth century French knights such as they appear in the following analyses.

If we seek an explanation of these truly childish *anachronisms*, it may be said : first, that they were more or less deliberate ; the clerics knew that their audiences were but little educated, that they had never read and would never read the ancient works, and that authors were obliged to adapt themselves to their taste. Now these knights and ladies knew nothing but war and love, and these according to certain rites and customs without which all is crime or discourtesy. Furthermore, we should never forget, when we wish to explain the attitude of the Middle Ages towards antiquity, that there had been a sudden and lengthy rupture of tradition : it was impossible for these Christians and barbarians to understand perfectly the civilisation and sentiments of Greece and Rome. All that they could comprehend was the *exploit*, interpreted and commented in what was to them a modern manner, and the *moral lesson*, clumsily adapted from paganism to Christianity. The French mind required several centuries of fumbling, and the lessons given by Italy (where tradition had been less completely interrupted), to reach in the sixteenth century an historical and human understanding of antiquity.

**Le Roman d'Alexandre.** — This poem of twenty thousand *alexandrine* verses (1), attributed to two authors, Lambert le Tort and Alexandre de Bernay, was derived chiefly from a Greek romance written at Alexandria about the second century of our era, attributed to Callisthenes (2), of which various Latin translations or adaptations were widely circulated throughout France and Germany. The author of this work had borrowed its principal elements from the Latin historian, but had intermingled all sorts of oriental fables.

The story begins with the birth of Alexander ; his education by Aristotle ; the training of Bucephalus. With his twelve peers, Alexander makes war on Nicolas, King of Césaire (Cesarea) : then he attacks Darius King of Persia : here follows a series of marches and battles which are approximately true to history, but in which the *manners* are altogether modern. Then we come to the most singular and original part of the romance : the description of India, the fantastic fauna and flora of which more than once surprise us. Alexander descends to the bottom of the sea in a glass bell, and mounts into the air in a skiff drawn by griffins. The historical thread is resumed, and through a number of remarkable episodes we come to the death of Alexander, who is poisoned by two traitors.

This poem was continued, and created a whole succession of other works. *Alexandre* enjoyed in the Middle Ages great celebrity. " The distinctive trait of these romances," says G. Paris, " is to exalt in the person of Alexander those chivalric virtues which were

(1) The verse of twelve syllables, known as the *alexandrine*, is said to have taken its name from this poem.

(2) Callisthenes was a Greek historian, who died in 328 B. C. He accompanied Alexander in his Asiatic campaign, and paid with his life for his courage. A history of Alexander was published in the Middle Ages under his name, which is known as *Histoire du pseudo-Callisthènes*.

most in fashion in the twelfth century, above all *liberality*, so dear to the *trouveres* and jugglers (1). "

**Le Roman de Troie.** — This romance was composed by Benoît de Sainte-More (2), who dedicated it, towards the end of the twelfth century, to Aliénor de Guienne, Queen of England. It is written in rhymed octosyllabics, and contains about thirty thousand verses. It is the best written and most famous of the antique romances. The author has not followed either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, but has taken for his models two apocryphal works, the *Histoire de la ruine de Troie*, attributed to Darès le Phrygien, and the *Journal*

*de la guerre de Troie*, by Dictys de Crète (3).

Benoît de Sainte-More begins with the events connected with Jason's conquest of the Golden Fleece, describes the first siege of Troy and the death of Laomedon, then the rape of Helen and the second siege. It is impossible to give here even a brief analysis of the episodes of all sorts warlike, chivalric, gallant, contained in this immense poem. Not only does the poet recount, with numberless digressions, the siege of Troy and its conquest by the Greeks, but narrates also the *return* of all the heroes, Ajax, Diomedes, Agamemnon, Ulysses, Pyrrhus. It is a veritable Greco-Trojan encyclopedia.

Interesting roles are



THE MEETING OF HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE AT THE SEALED DOORS

*From a miniature of the beginning of the XIV century in a manuscript of the Roman de Troie.*

"How Andromache holds Hector's son in her arms and shows him to his father, and how his mother and sisters weep and mourn because he wishes to go to war.

Hector is the "baron" represented with a helmet on his head; the crowned King is his father Priam.

played by the women, Andromache, Polyxena, Medea. Among the warriors Hector is the author's favourite: he is the type of the perfect knight. Moreover, Benoît accepts the legend according to which the Franks are the descendants of Francus, son of Hector. This subject was taken up again in the sixteenth century by Jean le Maire

(1) G. PARIS. *Hist. de la littérature au moyen âge*, § 44.

(2) It is not known if this Benoît de Sainte-More is the same who versified *La Chronique des ducs de Normandie*, for Henry II of England, in forty thousand verses.

(3) Of these two works only Latin abridgements are known. People were convinced, in the Middle Ages, that Darès and Dictys had published, before Homer, *historic and contradictory* accounts of events to which they did not add the intervention of the gods.

in his *Illustrations des Gaules*, and by Ronsard in his *Franciade*. This romance had an immense success in France and other countries (1).

**Le Roman d'Énéas**, — Perhaps to the same author should be attributed this *Énéas*, which is a clever but too chivalric adaptation of Virgil's *Æneid*. The poet has proved his inventive power by creating almost entirely the character and role of Lavinie, daughter of King Latinus and the betrothed of Éuée. In this poem the marvellous appears, which was entirely absent from the *Roman de Troie*.

**Le Roman de Thèbes**. — This work contains ten thousand octosyllabic verses. It has been attributed, but without certain proof, to Benoit de Sainte-More. The author's sources were summaries of the story of Oedipus and of *La Thébàide* by Statius; he does not seem to have known the Greek or Latin originals.

The poem begins with the adventures of Oedipus, from his infancy to his exile. Then follows the narrative, overcharged with details, of the struggle between Eteocles and Polynices, terminating with the funeral of the two brothers, enemies even in death. Among the chief knightly *personages* must be mentioned Tydée, Duke of Calidon;Adraste King of Greece; Capanée, the impious and brutal warrior; and among the women: Argia, wife of Polynices; Antigone and Ismene, daughters of Oedipus; Salemandre, daughter of Daire le Roux, a type of resigned love.

The fame of this romance equalled that of the preceding one. We possess several rehandlings, in prose.



OEDIPUS AND THE SPHINX

« How Oedipus solved the riddle which the monster asked him, and when he had done so he killed him. »

From a miniature of the beginning of the xiv century, in a manuscript of the *Roman de Thèbes*.

## II. — ALLEGORICAL POETRY. — LE ROMAN DE LA ROSE.

*Allegory* was very much the fashion during the Middle Ages. But it is a mistake to attribute its introduction to the authors of *Le Roman de la Rose*, as

(1) Read, in the *Chrestomathie* of M. L. CLÉDAT, p. 160, the dialogue between Hector and Andromache.

is sometimes done. They only gave reason and authority to its use in a remarkable work.

Allegory consists essentially in causing Ideas, Sentiments, and in a more general way, Abstractions, to act and speak as if they were living beings. Painting and Sculpture make use of allegory when they represent Peace, War, Justice, Charity, under the form of human beings, whose physiognomies, gestures, costumes and attributes make the meaning evident.

In the plastic arts allegory is nearly always clear and suggestive. Its effect is less sure and it soon tires in poetic works, above all when applied to intimate sentiments which do not reveal themselves ordinarily by sufficiently distinct and apparent physical effects. Though the reader easily forms an image of Peace, War, Abundance, Discord, etc., it is difficult for him to see anything but words — despite the capital letters — in Virtue, Prudence, Ignorance, etc., still more so when he has to do with a whole army of Allegories, as in the Middle Ages, expressing various shades of love, of religion, etc.

How could the singular taste for this system have come about in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries? It might be attributed to a lack of capacity for pure abstraction and for psychology, if the romances of the Round Table and those of antiquity did not prove to us that polite society in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was entirely capable of following a delicate analysis of sentiments without any recourse to allegory (cf. *Tristan* and *Le Chevalier au Lion*). So far from being a *primitive* mode of expression, the use of allegory in the Middle Ages was a refinement and, as it were, a crisis of *affectation*, a crisis which was to be repeated in the first half of the seventeenth century. The use of *allegory* and its success would not have been so widespread if, thus used, it had not piqued the curiosity and flattered the vanity of readers, particularly women, who disdain nothing in literature and art so much as simplicity and clearness.

**Le Roman de la Rose.** — Of all the allegorical works written in the Middle Ages, the most celebrated is *Le Roman de la Rose*, which consists of two parts: the first dates from about 1230, and was composed by Guillaume de Lorris. It is said that he died very young, without having had sufficient time to finish his romance, which was continued, about forty years later, by Jean Clopinel, surnamed Jean de Meun, who died about 1305.

The two parts are very different, both in inspiration and style, and must therefore be analysed separately.

**Analysis of the First Part.** — Guillaume de Lorris declares that he is telling us a dream which came to him "il y a plus de cinq ans, lorsqu'il était dans sa vingtième année."

One morning in May he goes walking in the country, and comes to an orchard surrounded by a wall: on this wall are painted hideous images, particularly of Envy, Avar-



ice, Old Age (1). The door into the orchard is opened for the young man by Oyseuse (Idleness), who conducts him to a meadow where Déduit (Pleasure) the gods of Love, Beauty, Wealth, Courtesy, etc., are dancing. Among the wonders of the orchard Guillaume admires above all a rosebush, and one of its roses (which represents the beloved maiden) appears to him so fresh and beautiful that he cannot turn away his eyes from it.

Meanwhile, Love strikes him with his darts, and approaching him, teaches him a complete *Art of Love* in eight hundred verses, after Ovid (2). Allegory is now introduced, and is ingeniously managed; indeed, the poet excels here in producing, by means of allegorical personages, impressions quite contrary to those of a youthful heart. "He has decomposed the soul of a young girl; he has extracted from it all its emotions, all its qualities and moods, general or particular; to these he has given a separate and distinct existence, with the faculty of individual action, each according to its own character. Thus he has evoked, around the rose; a whole world of personified abstractions which accomplish, in the service of the flower, the same functions as her sentiments in the soul of the maiden. Can-



THE RISING AND GOING FORTH OF THE « LOVER »

*From a miniature of the beginning of the XVI century, in a manuscript of the Roman de la Rose.*

By a current convention of the Middle Ages the picture represents *simultaneously* the Lover sleeping and dreaming, dressing in his room, descending the door steps, and walking in the country.

dour, Pity plead for the lover; Danger, Hatred, Fear prevent him from approaching the rose (3). "The young man, on his part, is served by Hearty-Welcome and Love, and persecuted by Male-Bouche (Slander), Reason, Jealousy, etc.

Thus instructed by Love, he remains in continual contemplation of the rose, when he

(1) Read this passage in the *Chrestomathie* of G. PARIS, p. 258.

(2) Read a selection from this *Art of Loring* in the *Chrestomathie* of M. L. SUDRE, p. 172. Three other selections from G. de Lorris are cited by M. L. CLÉDAT, pp. 193-196.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, pp. 32-34.

sees approaching Hearty-Welcome, son of Courtesy, who permits him to draw near the rosebush. But Danger, accompanied by Slander, Fear and Shame drive Guillaume far away from the flower garden. Reason comes and lectures the lover, but cannot convince him (1). Reason pacifies the anger of Danger; Candour and Pity bring back Hearty-Welcome, who again allows Guillaume to approach the rose, and permits him to kiss it. But Slander has seen everything, and tells Jealousy, who causes the flower-garden to be surrounded by a wall, and builds a tower in which to imprison Hearty-Welcome. Guillaume laments, and here ends, or is stopped, the first part of the poem.

It is easy to ridicule the play of allegory in the work of Guillaume de Lorris.



THE LOVER PAYS HOMAGE TO LOVE

« In this manner the lover becomes a subject of the God of Love, and pays him homage ».

From a miniature of the beginning of the XIV century, in a manuscript of the *Roman de la Rose*.

We should prefer, no doubt, direct psychological analyses, like those which Chrétien de Troyes has so delicately developed in *Le Chevalier au Lion*. But, leaving its method aside, the first part of *Le Roman de la Rose* evinces genuine knowledge of the human heart. Young Love, troubled, by turns trusting to the point of imprudence and reserved to the point of disdain, is described with a sure touch: Guillaume is an ancestor, very remote, it is true, of Marivaux. We should note, also, that the charm of this first part lies in the respect it shows for woman and for love. The author has not touched upon — as nearly all

his contemporaries did, including the poet who continued his work — one of the most irritating themes of the bourgeois Middle Ages, the facile and stupid satire of women. He is *chivalrous* like Chrétien de Troyes, and gives us relief from the meannesses of the fabliaux and the farces, without departing from psychological truth.

Finally, considered as a poem, the first part of *Le Roman de la Rose* is one of the masterpieces of the Middle Ages. Its language is supple, clear, elegant, often vigorous and eloquent.

**Analysis of the Second Part.** — G. de Lorris, then, left his poem unfinished.

(1) E. LANGLOIS, chapter on *Le Roman de la Rose*, in the *Histoire de la littérature française* (Julléville-Colin), t. II, p. 111.

Perhaps he had only two episodes to be added: the deliverance of Hearty-Welcome and the conquest of the rose, and then the *dream* would be finished. For about forty years French society contented itself with *Le Roman de la Rose* as its author had left it. Then, about 1277, Jean de Meun undertook to finish it; and—unique example in the history of modern literatures—this sequel was ever after inseparable from the original.

Reason returns to console the knight, who is in despair. Reason's discourse is a formal treatise on love and the passions, in more than two thousand verses, containing a pe-dantic medley of moral and historical examples drawn from antiquity. The young man then goes to seek Ami, who gives him advice founded on the laws of *chivalry*, adjures him to be liberal without excess, and addresses to him rather a clever satire on marriage. Here occur several passages, celebrated for their boldness, on the Golden Age (1), the birth of society, of royal power, etc. (2). Love, returning, decides to attempt the storming of the tower where Hearty-Welcome is imprisoned; he reviews his soldiers, Courtesy, Liberality, Candour, Pity, Boldness, and a new character, False-Appearance, son of Hypocrisy, who lives sometimes in the world, sometimes in a cloister. Here the poet delivers a violent diatribe against the mendicants. The lover succeeds in entering the tower and reaching Hearty-Welcome, but he is soon driven out by Danger. Without any preparation, we are now transported to Nature, who is working to protect species from death, and who is confessing to her chaplain, Genius. This confession, in two thousand six hundred verses, is a sort of encyclopedia of scientific knowledge during the Middle Ages. This is followed by a sermon delivered by Genius to the personages who are preparing to attack the tower. Venus joins them, and sets the tower afire; Danger, Shame and Fear fly, and Hearty-Welcome permits the young man to pluck the rose.



THE PLEASURE OF THE DANCE

*From a miniature of the beginning of the xiv century, in a manuscript of the Roman de la Rose.*

While the allegory in the first part constitutes, for those who understand how to interpret it, a delicate psychology of love at once timid and passionate, in the second part the fictitious action becomes obscure and incoherent. It becomes

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 14.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 37.

no more than a frame in which a learned and audacious mind, full of poetical vivacity and asperity, fixes its own theories and memories.

We speak later on of the continual contrast presented in French literature between the idealistic spirit and plain common sense. In *Le Roman de la Rose* these two spirits appear alternately; and the poem is in this respect one of those which sum up the best all the different aspirations of the Middle Ages. But Guillaume de Lorris represents chiefly the past, and Jean de Meun the future: the latter foreruns Rabelais, Voltaire, Beaumarchais. He is the first example of those writers who, instead of merely creating a work of art, seek to inspire and direct opinion. Of his kind, furthermore, and in spite of his prolixity, he is a great writer; he has the instinct for the powerful and piquant word; when he wants to, he knows how to compress into a restrained couplet, in a neat rejoinder, the whole of a picture or of an idea.

**Success of *Le Roman de la Rose*.** — Thus completed, *Le Roman de la Rose* became, from the end of the fourteenth to the middle of the sixteenth century, the most celebrated work of French literature. The MSS. still in existence are very numerous; and from the time of the invention of printing editions were multiplied. Marot published a new edition in 1527, the preface of which is an excellent document. And the *Pléiade*, which condemned the Middle Ages, excepted *Le Roman de la Rose*.

"In France," says G. Paris, "the influence of this book dominated the whole period which followed, and this influence cannot be said to have been happy: it resulted in giving an allegorical form to literature for a long time and, on the other hand, a prosaic, positive, often pedantic character, which divests of all charm most of the poems of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (1)."

The success of a work may be measured by the opposition it excites. *Le Roman de la Rose* was hotly attacked: Christine de Pisan judged it worthy to be burned; Gerson, chancellor of the University, wrote a book, *Vision de Gerson* (1402), in which he borrowed the allegorical system of the book he censured, and in which he severely condemned the boldness of Jean de Meun.

### III. — DIDACTIC LITERATURE

In no other period of French history have didactic treatises of all sorts, in verse or in prose, been so numerous as in the Middle Ages. The clerics wrote upon all questions, scientific or moral; but what they sought above all, in the study of astronomy, of natural history, etc., was to inculcate a moral or religious principle by the use of examples.

(1) G. PARIS, *Hist. de la littérature au moyen âge*, § 115.



**Bestiaires and Lapidaires.** — So, in the *Bestiaires* (1), they describe animals in order to find analogies between them and God, Christ, virtues and vices. In the *Lapidaires*, they enumerate the nature and properties of precious or exotic stones, drawn from oriental sources.

**Image du Monde.** — **Le Trésor.** — Among the longer works, which may be regarded as encyclopedias of mediæval science, should be mentioned *L'Image du Monde* (XIII century), by Gautier de Metz, in seven thousand verses; *Le Trésor*, in prose, by Brunetto Latini (1265), a Florentine who, it is said, was Dante Alighieri's master. The latter is a compilation of the Bible, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca and a number of more or less technical works written in Latin by clerics of previous centuries. It enjoyed great celebrity.

**Chastiments.** — Works whose tendencies are pedagogical are designated by the name of *Chastiment* or *Castoiment*. The most famous is the *Chastiment d'un Père à son fils* (XII century), which is very curious because it includes a certain number of Arabian tales that are akin in subject to some of the French *fabliaux* (2).

**Dits.** — Finally, there is a great number of short works in verse, more satirical than didactic, called *Dits*, and directed against the monks, the different guilds, women, etc.: *Le Dit des Jacobins*, *Le Dit des Cordeliers*, *Le Dit des Cornettes* (against head-dresses), *Le Dit des Rues de Paris*, *Le Dit du bon vin*, *Le Débat du vin et de l'eau*, *La Bataille de Carême et de Carnage*, etc.

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(1) The most famous *Bestiaires* are those of Philippe de Thaon (XII century) and of Guillaume Le Clerc (1210).

(2) This *Chastiment* is the translation in verse of the *Disciplina clericalis*, written at the beginning of the twelfth century by Pierre Alphonse, a Spanish Jew converted to Christianity; it comes from oriental sources. The same work was translated into prose under the title of *Discipline de Clergie*.





« THE « DIT » OF THE THREE DEAD PEOPLE AND THE THREE LIVING PEOPLE ».  
From a miniature in a manuscript of the beginning of the XIV century.

## CHAPTER V.

### BOURGEOIS AND SATIRICAL LITERATURE.

#### ROMAN DE RENART. — FABLIAUX. — RUTEBEUF.

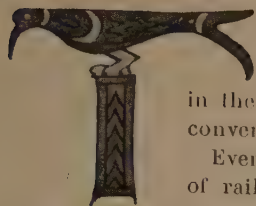
#### SUMMARY

**THE ESPRIT GAULOIS** is opposed to the feudal, chivalric or courteous spirit. The exercise of it is the retaliation of the **bourgeoisie** against the nobility and clergy.

1. **Fables** were very popular during the Middle Ages, and collections were made of them under the name of **Ysopets**. The most famous **Ysopet** is that of Marie de France (XII century). — The compilation of **fables** and **stories of animals** from the twelfth to the fourteenth century resulted in **Le Roman de Renart**, a sort of animal epic whose main theme is the struggle between the fox (**Renart**) and the wolf (**Ysengrin**), and the triumph of craft over force.

2. **THE FABLIAUX** are amusing tales in verse : of these we possess about 150 (of the XIII century); some of them are mere anecdotes but well-constructed, some are satirical, some moral. In them we find valuable details on the manners of the time (**Les Perdrix**, **Le Vilain Mire**, **La Housse Partie**).

3. **RUTEBEUF** (died 1280) is remarkable for his satirical wit (against the University, the monks, etc.), and especially for his poetry, which is **individual** and **sincere**: he is an ancestor of Villon.



DECORATED LETTER  
from a manus-  
cript of the  
VII century.

he *esprit gaulois*. — To feudal and chivalric inspiration, to the religious, the patriotic or the sentimental ideal, which glow in the *chansons de geste* and in the romances of the Round Table, was opposed what is conventionally called the *esprit gaulois*.

Even now we understand by this name that spirit of satire, of raillery, of disparagement, of popular and cynical gaiety which inspires a certain part of French literature.

Century after century we find this same contrast. To *Roland* and *Tristan* are opposed *Renart* and the *fabliaux*; to far-fetched *affectation*, *burlesque*; to *symbolism*, *naturalism*. In fact, this antithesis exists in every country and in all literatures, and is often found in the work of one man, according to the different periods of his inspiration. Besides, it is unjust to the Gauls, to characterize by an epithet made from their name all that is less pure and elevated in French literature. The proof that the Gauls did not possess this humiliating monopoly lies in the fact that chivalric love was *celtic* in origin rather than of Germanic importation, and that the poetry of the *troubadours*, entirely Gallo-Roman, sinned rather through an excess of refinement.

To be just, we should say, not the *esprit gaulois* but the *esprit bourgeois*. These satirical and irreverent works are a retaliation on the part of the weak against the powerful. They cut more deeply in the Middle Ages because the social hierarchy was then more strongly organised and maintained. It is this fact which gives such tang and bitterness to these attacks directed against the nobility and the Church.

We shall study successively in this chapter *Le Roman de Renart*, the *fabliaux* and the poet Rutebeuf.

## I. — LE ROMAN DE RENART.

**Fables in the Middle Ages.** — The Middle Ages evinced a particular taste for the apologue. In fact, the works of antiquity were then searched for lessons in practical morals; and, of all the genres, the apologue offered the richest harvest of examples (1).

The first collection of fables written in French and in verse is that of *Marie de France*, who, in the twelfth century, translated an English *Romulus* attributed

(1) French writers, from the eleventh to the fifteenth century, found subjects for their fables in many Latin collections.

The chief ones are: that of Avianus (a Latin author who probably lived in the fourth century B. C.), who left forty-two fables in elegiac distichs; and that which bears the title of *Romulus*, comprising, in its complete form, about eighty fables in Latin prose, adapted from Æsop, from Phædrus and from India.

to King Alfred. This collection has the title of *Ysopet* (derived from the word *Æsop*. Several other *Ysopets* exist (1).

In addition to those fables transmitted by antiquity, great numbers of them were circulated by popular tradition. These *animal tales*, "different from the apologue," according to G. Paris, "in that they have no moral aim, are based upon a sympathetic and gay observation of the ways of certain animals, and attribute to them, in order to excite laughter, such adventures as conform to their supposed character and their known habits (2)."

**Sources of Le Roman de Renart.** — The *animal tales*, to which were joined



THE FOX AND THE STORK

From a miniature of the xiv century, in a manuscript of the *Fables* by Marie de France

— after leaving aside their *morals* — a number of *Æsop's* fables, formed altogether, probably in the twelfth century, a sort of *animal epic*. "The great innovation," says Gaston Paris, "was to individualise the heroes of these narratives and give them proper names; it was no longer the adventures of a wolf, of a fox, but of Isengrin and of Raganhard, with their wives Richild and Hersind (later Isengrin, Renart, Richeut, Hersent). All the episodes centre around these personages in a single, truly epic narrative, which passes from the first quarrels of the two cronies to the death of Isengrin or to the victory of Renart (3)."

**The Different Parts of Le Roman de Renart.** — There exist, in French, a number of separate narratives composing altogether the work popularly known as *Le Roman de Renart*. The authors of this immense compilation are not all known to us (only Richard de Lison, Pierre de Saint-Cloud and a priest of the Croix-en-Brie are mentioned). "But," says M. L. Sudre, "they must have been legion, for in the twelfth and especially the thirteenth centuries, their number had already been increased by many who, worthy imitators of their contemporaries who brought up to date the *chansons de geste*, undertook to

(1) Some of these mediæval fables may be found in the *Récits extraits des poètes et prosateurs du moyen âge*, de G. PARIS, p. 411. — Read *le Loup et l'Agneau*, by MARIE DE FRANCE in *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 17.

(2) G. PARIS, *Littérature française du moyen âge*, § 82.

(3) *Id.*, *Ibid.*, § 84. — It was probably in the North of France, in Picardy, that the first romance of this kind was written. We do not possess the primitive version; but we can obtain an idea of it from a Latin poem, the *Isengrinus*, written in the twelfth century by Nivard de Gand, and from a German poem, the *Reinhart Fuchs*, composed about 1180 by Henri Le Gliechzare: the latter merely translated a French romance now lost.



rehandle each episode and alas ! too often rendered it insipid and deprived it of all its early flavor (1). "

These many French sections may be grouped in two cycles : 1. The primitive cycle (XII and XIII centuries), comprising thirty to forty sections and a total of 34,000 lines of verse : Pierre de Saint-Cloud must have been the author of the first two ; 2. In the fourteenth century we have the *Renart le Nouvel* (by Jakemars Gielée), and *Renart le Contrefait* (that is, rewritten after the older poem) and which contains 50,000 lines. At the end of the fourteenth century, Eustache Deschamps added a final poem of 3,000 lines. — The whole contains more than 100,000 lines.



THE DONKEY AND THE LITTLE DOG

From a miniature of the beginning of the XIV century, in a manuscript of the *Fables* by Marie de France.

**Characters.** — The chief heroes of this " ample comédie à cent actes divers, "

heroes who, throughout all the different sections, are always consistent, are : the fox (Latin *vulpeculum*) surnamed *Renart*, a proper name which became so celebrated that at a very early time the word *goupil* was dropped in favour of the sobriquet ; the wolf, *Isengrin* ; the she-fox, *Richeut* or *Hermeline* ; the she-wolf, *Hersent* ; the bear, *Bruno* ; the ass, *Bernard* ; the badger, *Grimbert* ; the cat, *Tibert* ; the crow, *Tiécelin* ; the sparrow, *Drouin*, etc. The animals are not named according to their nature, but like persons. The poet who first gave them these names, out of pure fancy, endowed them with traits so accurate and so well adapted to the appearance and habits of the animals, according to popular tradition, that they were forced upon his numerous imitators and successors.



THE FOX AND THE CROW

After a miniature of the beginning of the XIV century, in a manuscript of the *Fables* by Marie de France.

ors. — All the names of this first group are of Germanic origin.

A second group bears French, symbolical names, founded upon the nature or physique of the animals : the lion, *Noble* ; the lioness, *Fièrre* or *Orqueilleuse* ; the

(1) *Histoire de la littérature française*, Paris, Colin, 1896, t. II, chap. I, p. 15 (*Les Romans du Renard*, par L. SUDRE).

cock, *Chantecler*; the hare, *Couart*; the bull, *Bruiant*; the sheep, *Belin*; the rat, *Pelé*; the slug, *Tardif*; the hens, *Blanche*, *Noire*, *Roussotte*, etc.

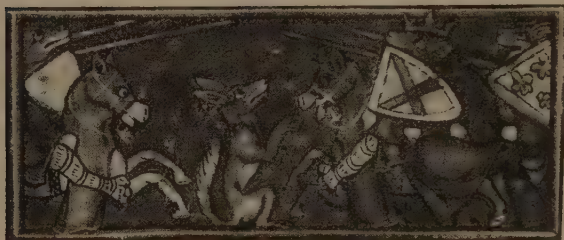
**Analysis of "Renart."** — All these characters reappear in the many episodes of the romance, which results in a sort of unity in the ensemble.

The story begins with the birth of Renart and Isengrin. — After having been driven out of terrestrial Paradise, Adam and Eve have received from God a rod which, if struck upon the sea, will bring them what they desire. Adam causes useful animals to emerge from the waves; Eve, harmful animals; thus Isengrin and Renart owe their life to her. Renart soon becomes the chief hero of the poem.

Renart first exercises his wits on animals more feeble than himself; he is flouted and taken in by each of them. Chantecler, seized and carried off by Renart, advises

his ravisher to reply to the revilement of the peasants; Renart opens his mouth and the cock escapes. The titmouse, under pretext of giving the kiss of peace to Renart, throws moss and leaves in his mouth. Tiécelin, the crow, lets fall the cheese which he held between his feet, but he himself escapes from another ruse of the fox (1). Tibert, the cat, causes Renart to fall into the trap which the latter had set for him.

The idea of the romance is evidently the retaliation of the weak against the



RENART IMPLORING PARDON FROM NOBLE

« How the two armies fight, and how Renart falls down before the King and asks for pardon ».

*From a miniature of the end of the XIII century, in a manuscript of the Roman de Renart.*

strong; for, while Renart is vanquished by the cock, the titmouse, the crow and the cat, he himself triumphs over the wolf, the bear, the lion, etc.

The main episodes of the struggle between Renart and Isengrin are as follows: Renart, to revenge himself upon Isengrin, who has devoured a large piece of bacon of which the fox expected a share, leads him to a cellar where he makes him drunk; Isengrin begins to speak and sing so loudly that he is surprised and beaten.—Renart, seeing a cart loaded with fish, especially eels, lies down beside the road and pretends to be dead; the driver of the cart picks him up in order to sell his skin, and lays him on his baskets. Renart quietly winds several eels around his neck, jumps to the ground and runs away (2). While he is having his eels roasted in his castle of *Mauvertuis* (*pertuis* means *trou*; cf. *pertuisane*), Isengrin passes by; the odour of the cooking intoxicates him, and he asks Renart how he came to procure such an excellent dish. It is at this time that Renart takes the wolf to a frozen pond, and tells him to let his tail hang in the water, through a hole in the ice. Renart has fastened a pail to Isengrin's tail, in which the fish will be caught, and when he feels that it has become heavy, the wolf will only have to draw it up. Isengrin is soon unable to move, being imprisoned in the ice. Hunters and their dogs arrive; one of the men shoots at the wolf but aims badly; Isengrin's tail

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 20.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 41.

is cut off even with the ice, and he escapes.—Renart is at the bottom of a well, and does not know how to get out; Isengrin arrives, and Renart persuades him to get into the other bucket in order to come and join him in paradise; the weight of Isengrin raises Renart's bucket, and the wolf remains in his turn at the bottom of the well, from which he is only drawn out to be half stunned with blows.

In **Renart Teinturier**, Renart has fallen into a tub full of yellow liquid prepared for dyeing. During his long absence, his wife, Hermeline, wishes to marry her cousin Grimbert, the badger. Renard, disguised as a juggler, is present at the preparations for the wedding, suddenly reveals himself, and severely chastises his forgetful wife. Isengrin and his wife Hersent play their part in this amusing episode, but the buffoonery is extravagant, and the animals do not seem to be so accurately portrayed as in the first sections.

**Le Jugement de Renart** is perhaps the most celebrated of all the parts. In all the more ancient versions the lion Noble, being ill, had summoned Renart to appear before him to answer the accusations of the wolf, the cat and the stag. Renart at last comes. He justifies himself by saying that he was travelling in search of a remedy for the lion: the latter must wrap his shoulders in the skin of the wolf, after the latter has been skinned alive, his feet in the skin of the cat, and that he should make himself a belt of the stag's skin (cf. La Fontaine: *Le Lion, le Loup et le Renard*). In *Le Jugement de Renart*, the lion is not ill. He is holding court and receiving his friends. A cortege arrives consisting of Chantecler and his hens, Pinte, Blanche, Noire and Roussotte, who bring the body of another hen, Coupée, just killed by Renart. The complaints of the lady Pinte and of Chantecler, the anger of Noble, the burial of the lady Coupée, are admirable parodies of the speeches and proceedings of the *chansons de geste*: it is here that the *esprit gaulois* is manifested in its most piquant manner (1). Bruno is sent to look for Renart, and then Tibert. Both fall into the traps set for them by the fox, and return all bleeding to report to the king the failure of their mission. At last Renart, full of audacity, presents himself. He humbly acknowledges his misdeeds, and asks leave, to expiate them, to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land (2).

The first group or first cycle of Renart ends with **Le Couronnement de Renart**. Here, Renart has entered a convent of Jacobins. Dressed as a monk, he goes to Noble to predict his early death, and make him realise the necessity of appointing his successor.



THE RECONCILIATION OF NOBLE AND RENART

« Renart and King Noble give each other the kiss of peace. »

From a miniature of the end of the XIII century, in  
a manuscript of the *Roman de Renart*.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 44.

(2) Cf. *The Reineke Fuchs*, and the adaptation of Goethe.

Noble, in his confession, avows that Renart only is capable of wearing the crown. Renart is eventually crowned : he persecutes the weak, and flatters the powerful ; he travels in Palestine, Spain, Italy (at Rome he is received by the Pope), in Germany, etc. This section is a satire against the mendicant orders.

In the fourteenth century, the continuations of Renart are more and more animated by a methodical and virulent spirit of ridicule. This spirit operates freely in **Renart le Nouveau**, in which the animals too often lose the comparatively natural character which they retained in the earlier sections : here are only battles, assaults, surprises, obscure allegories. — This is still more true of **Renart le Contrefait**, an immense incoherent poem, which owes its success to the malicious allusions and the pedantry with which it is filled. But here Renart personifies all the better the spirit of cleverness, of knavery, of resistance to authority, of lawlessness in every sense of the word : he is the forerunner of Pathelin, Panurge, and Figaro.

## II. — THE FABLIAUX.

**Definition.** — *Fabliau* is the Picard form of the French word *fableau* (cf. *biau* and *beau*). It is not by chance that this dialectal form has always been preferred to the French form : “ It is because,” says M. J. Bédier, “ Picardy is the province which seems to have developed this genre the most fully, and in one sense it is right that the form of the word should preserve for us this literary fact ” (1).

The *fabliau* is essentially a tale in verse, designed to excite laughter ; but this definition must not be too restricted, for there are, among the *fabliaux*, some which are amusing to the point of obscenity, while there are others which, by their sentimentality or the seriousness of the subject, should be classed with chivalric or edifying literature. About one hundred and fifty *fabliaux* have come down to us, collected in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

**The Spirit of the Fabliaux.** — The spirit which animates the *fabliaux* is not, properly speaking, satirical ; it is, rather, merry raillery, occasionally excessive and too *Gallic*, in the worst sense of the word, sometimes lovable and highly moral. Often, also, the *fabliau* is nothing more than an ingenious plot without pretention other than to pique and satisfy curiosity.

But the real interest of the *fabliaux* lies less in their morality, positive or negative, and in the cleverness of their plots, than in their direct and archly expressed observation of the manners of the time (2). We meet in them the principal types of aristocratic, clerical, middle class and popular society, with their appropriate costumes, speech and actions. The brutal or courtly knight, the country priest, the monk, the magistrate, the merchant, the small proprietor, the valet,

(1) J. BÉDIER, *Les Fabliaux*, Paris, 2<sup>e</sup> éd., 1895, p. 26.

(2) Taking into consideration, as said above, certain manners of oriental origin, or which characterised thirteenth century abuses, no longer in existence, and which had been unskillfully amalgamated to manners of more recent origin.



even the beggar—each plays his part according to nature. Noble or middle-class women are numerous, and not attractive; they are described as equally ill-natured and light. We recognize in this last point of view one of the most unfortunate characteristics of *gauloiseries*.

By their clever construction and their lifelike realism, the *fabliaux* may be compared with the *farces* of the comic drama. As they developed especially in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and the *farces* especially in the fifteenth, an effort has been made to establish a sort of relationship between the two genres, which would make the *farce* merely a dramatised *fabliau*. We do not find, however, in the comic drama of the fifteenth century any subject which has been treated by the *fabliaux* that have been preserved. But the theory remains true in so far as dramatic literature did succeed narrative. For a long time people were satisfied with hearing the juggler recite a short story; this juggler was a sort of actor, and imitated the gestures and the voice of the characters; in short, he acted several roles himself. Then audiences became more exacting and lazy; they required to see the scenery, and that the roles should be separated and characterised by costume and make-up.



" THE TALE OF THE FOOL "

From a miniature of the beginning of the xiv. century,  
in a manuscript of *Fabliaux*.

**Origin of the *Fabliaux*.** — It has been stated that French *fabliaux* were of oriental origin. In India, the religion of Buddha made use of tales and parables. These tales were spread throughout Europe from Byzantium, and afterwards by the movement of the Crusades; and many of them are to be found in sermons. But a large number of the *fabliaux* had their source simply in the great oral tradition known as *folk-lore* (4). The authors of the *fabliaux* frequently declare that they heard their story told in such and such a country or village. The same tales are found, with local variations, in all regions. They

(4) *Folk-lore* signifies the literature of the people. The first famous work of this kind is the collection of Tales made by the brothers Grimm (Gottingen, 1812). Cf. *Hist. de la litt. allemande*, by M. BOSSERT. Hachette, 1904, p. 832.

form an ancient treasure common to humanity, where all authors have found material, and which has become in recent years the object of intense research. However, thanks especially to the labor and lessons of M. J. Bédier, we are beginning to rid ourselves of the superstition of *folk-lore*, and to perceive that many of the *fabliaux* were simply the works of learned *clerics* or of *trouvères*, and that it is useless to seek their origin either in the Orient or in popular traditions (1).

**The Principal Fabliaux.** — There are, as we have said, various kinds of *fabliaux*. We shall analyse a few of them, from those founded on a play of words, a naïve mistake, to the most serious.

**Le Curé qui mangea des mûres.** — A curé is returning from a tournament, on horseback. Passing by a bush full of blackberries, he stops, but as he cannot reach the berries, he stands up, balancing himself on his saddle. "I shall be in a nice mess", said he, "if some practical joker cried: *hue!*" But he pronounces aloud the word *hue!* The horse runs away, and the curé falls into the bush.

**La Vieille qui graissa la patte au chevalier.** — A poor old woman, whose cow has been taken by the squire, is told that she can get it back again if she will grease the palm (*graisser la patte*) of the steward. She goes to the castle with a piece of bacon, and perceiving the Squire, who is walking with his hands behind his back, she approaches him silently and greases his palm...

**Estula.** — In this *fabliau*, the ambiguity is caused by the name of a dog, *Estula*. Hearing a noise in his garden during the night, a bourgeois sends his son to call the dog. The child calls, "Estula!" One of the two thieves, thinking it is his accomplice calling him, answers, "Yes, I am here!" The child, convinced that the dog has spoken, runs for the curé to exorcise it. When the curé arrives, the other thief, thinking he sees the first thief bringing a sheep, says, "I have a good knife, I will kill it at once, lest it make a noise." The horrified curé runs away, leaving his surplice caught in a bush (2).

**Les Perdrix.** — A peasant named Gombaudo has caught two partridges; he gives them to his wife to cook, while he goes to invite the curé to come and eat with them. In her husband's absence, the wife who is very greedy, tastes the partridges and finishes by eating them all up. The peasant returns, and his wife advises him to sharpen his knife. Meanwhile, the curé arrives, and the woman says to him, "Partridges there are none; Gombaudo wants to cut off your ears; see him sharpening his knife; Run!" And to her husband she cries: "Quick! the priest is carrying off the partridges!" Gombaudo, with his knife in his hand, rushes after the priest, who has time to reach his presbytery and lock himself in.

**Le Vilain Mire** (*Le Paysan Médecin*). — A peasant beats his wife every day, while she waits for a chance to revenge herself. Two messengers pass by: the king's daughter has a fish-bone in her throat, and a *mire* (*médecin*) is needed at once. The wife of the

(1) On the question of the origin of the *fabliaux*, cf. G. PARIS, *La Poésie au moyen âge*, 2nd series, Hachette, 1903, p. 75; 2nd J. BÉDIER, *Les Fabliaux*.

(2) Read *Estula* in the *Chrestomathie* of G. PARIS, p. 153.

peasant tells the king's messengers that her husband is an excellent doctor, but that he will not acknowledge it unless he is soundly beaten. Thoroughly whipped, and *doctor in spite of himself*, the peasant follows the messengers to court. In the princess's presence he makes such grotesque contortions that she laughs excessively, which delivers her from the fish-bone.—Thenceforth, the reputation of the pretended *doctor* becomes so great that sick people come to him from every direction. To get rid of them he conceives the following strategy: he places all his patients in front of him, and tells them that he will cure them all in succession, with the ashes of the one who is the most ill, but as none desires to be burned, they all declare themselves to be quite well. Finally, the peasant returns to his wife, laden with gifts, and promises the king to be always in readiness to attend him without first the necessity of a beating. Molière's comedy, *Le Médecin malgré lui*, was inspired by this *fabliau* (1).

### Le Tombeur Notre-

**Dame** (*Le Jongleur de Notre-*

*Dame*). — A juggler, having retired to the monastery of Clairvaux, finding himself very ignorant, is unhappy because he cannot take part in the services and ceremonies. Nevertheless, he wishes in his own way to pay honour to the Virgin; so, standing before her statue, he performs all the tricks of his profession until he falls down with fatigue. The other monks surprise him in the performance of these strange devotions. Soon afterwards he dies, and the Virgin herself appears, with angels, to carry off to Paradise the soul of this naïve juggler (2).



“ THE SIMILE OF THE MEADOW ”

From a miniature of the beginning of the xiv century, in a manuscript of *Fabliaux*.

**La Housse Partie** (*La Couverture partagée*). — A rich bourgeois sacrifices all his fortune in order to achieve an advantageous marriage for his son. The latter receives his father into his own house for twelve years; but one day, on the instigation of his wife, he drives him forth. “Give me at least”, said the old man, “a coverlet to keep me warm.” The son sends his little boy to fetch a horse-blanket from the stable; but the boy cuts the blanket in two and gives only half to his grandfather. Then follow the lamentations of the old man, and the father's reproaches to the child, who replies: “The other half I am keeping for you; when you have given me all your property and you are old, I shall drive you out in my turn, and I shall give you what you have just given him.” The father understands the lesson, and the old man stays in his home (3).

**Le Chevalier au barizel** (*barillet*). — An impious knight goes on Good Friday to

(1) *Chrestomathie* of M. L. CLÉDAT, p. 297.

(2) *Chrestomathie* of M. L. CLÉDAT, p. 231.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 49.

worry a hermit in his retreat. He makes a mock confession to him. "I have only one penance to impose upon you", says the hermit, "go and fill this *little barrel* with water from the brook." The knight goes and dips his little barrel into the brook, but not a drop of water enters. Furious, he declares he will not rest until the barrel is filled. He goes off, and wanders from one country to another, trying always in vain to fill the little barrel and never succeeding. At the end of a year he returns day by day nearer to the hermit. He is worn out and hardly to be recognized, but just as hard and impenitent as he was at his departure. Seeing him so wretched, the hermit is filled with pity; he begins to weep and implore God to be merciful to so great a sinner as this. The hermit's emotion works upon the knight. A tear falls from his eyes into the bung-hole of the empty barrel which he carries suspended to his neck. The repentant knight then makes an honest confession, and dies holily in the arms of the hermit (1).

These few examples suffice to show the variety and ingeniousness of the *fabliaux*. In these analyses we have followed an ascending order: beginning with the most simple and naïve little stories, we have ended with serious and edifying tales. We should note, also, among the famous *fabliaux*: *Les Trois Aveugles de Compiègne* (2), *Merlin Merlot* (3), and *L'Ange et l'Ermite* (4).

### III. — RUTEBEUF (died 1280).

While a few of the authors of the *fabliaux* are known to us, it would be useless to mention the names of those authors whose survival is due to a single agreeable tale.

But among satirical poets who were truly personal, and prolific, in the thirteenth century, special place must be allotted to Rutebeuf, who is the finished type of the poor and needy *trouvère*, and the ancestor of Villon.

But little is told of his life: two dates only are known, that of his second marriage in 1261, and of his death in 1280. He has written a few *fabliaux*; a dramatic monologue, *Le Dit de l'Herberie*; a miracle-play, *Théophile*, and numerous satirical pieces against women, the University, the mendicants, etc. As a satirical poet, he has vivacity and caustic power. But his chief value lies in his lyrical poetry; a hundred years before Villon, he sang with poignant sincerity his moral and physical misery (5), his devouring passion for play, his unhappy situation as a man of letters in the pay of great lords, and finally his remorse and penitence.

(1) Read *Le Chevalier au barillet* in G. PARIS, *Récits*, etc., p. 126.

(2) GASTON PARIS, *Récits*, etc., p. 93.

(3) *Id.*, *Récits* etc., p. 117.

(4) *Id.*, *La Poésie au moyen âge*, 2nd series, Hachette, p. 151. *L'Ange et l'Ermite* has been imitated by Voltaire in chapter xx of *Zadig*; but the mediæval tale is far superior.

(5) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 55; 1st cycle, p. 27. — Cf. *Chrestomathie* of M. L. CLÉDAT, p. 350. — On Rutebeuf as dramatic poet, see the chapter on *Mystères* and on *La Comédie au moyen âge*.



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" SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI "

From a miniature of the xv century.



A TROUBADOUR  
Bonifaci Calbo.



A TROUVÈRE  
The comte de Bar.



A TROUBADOUR  
Perdigon.

*From three miniatures of the XIII century*

## CHAPTER VI.

### LYRIC POETRY.

#### SUMMARY

**MEDIAEVAL LYRIC POETRY** derived from the *chanson*; this is the literary epoch of a genre essentially popular. It subdivides into two periods: first, up to the fourteenth century; second, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in which lyricism becomes more personal in character. The poetry of the south (troubadours) influences in the thirteenth century the poetry of the north (trouvères).

1. **TWELFTH AND THIRTEENTH CENTURIES.** — The genres of popular origin are: the *chanson d'histoire*, the *aube*, the *rondeau*, the *pastourelle*, etc. From the south comes the *jeu-parti*, the *sirvente*, the *ballade*, etc., and *l'amour courtois*. — Among the troubadours: **JOFOY RUDEL**, **BERNARD DE VENTADOUR**, **BERTRAND DE BORN**, etc.; among the trouvères: **CONON DE BETHUNE**, **THIBAUT DE CHAMPAGNE**, **COLIN MUSSET**.

2. **FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURIES.** — **EUSTACHE DES CHAMPS**, lyric and historical poet; **CHRISTINE DE PISAN**; **ALAIN CHARTIER**, surnamed the father of French eloquence; **CHARLES D'ORLÉANS**, graceful and melancholy.

3. **FRANÇOIS VILLON**, student, leads a vagabond and criminal life. He writes the *Petit Testament* (1456) and the *Grand Testament* (1461), in which he mingles with traditional jests the sincere and deepfelt expression of his remorse, and deals with the great lyric themes of love, death, etc. He is the first of great French poets, and has never been forgotten.



DECORATED LETTIER  
of the beginning of the  
xv century.

**DEFINITION AND CLASSIFICATION.** — The lyricism of the Middle Ages has, with few exceptions, nothing of the religious and patriotic grandeur of the Hebrews and the Greeks, nor of the moral profundity of romantic lyricism. It is nearer akin to that of the Latins. Everything, themes, sentiments, rhythms, may be traced to the *chanson*; and music is inseparable from it.

There existed from a very early time *cantilènes* written in the vulgar tongue on religious or profane subjects, dance-songs, *rondes*, patriotic or satirical stanzas, narrative *complaintes*,

etc. Briefly, all those compositions which now belong to the popular domain, and that of childhood, had in the Middle Ages their *literary period*.

But it must no longer be held, since the conclusions reached by M. J. Bédier, that mediæval lyrical poetry was of popular origin. It seems to be established, on the contrary, that each genre was created and developed in the beginning by genuine *artists*, and that the naïveté found in their work was merely a product of refined literary art.

In the extensive development of lyricism between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, the following points must be observed:

1. The lyric poets of the north, the *trouvères*, are distinguishable from the lyric poets of the south, the *troubadours*; the latter developed their art to a high degree of refinement, both in subject and form, and in the thirteenth century they exercised a considerable influence upon the poetry of the north.

2. The *trouvères*, properly speaking, belong to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the lyric poet was no longer generally a great lord or a *juggler*; he became a man of letters, a poet in the more modern sense of the word.

The subject should therefore be divided into two parts: in the *First Part* we shall study mediæval lyricism properly so called—the *trouvères* of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. And although Provençal poetry is not in the domain of our history, and in general does not enter into our plan, we shall speak of it in so far as it shall be necessary for a comprehension of the transformations of genres and of sentiments. In the *Second Part*, we shall group the lyric poets of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: Eustache Deschamps, Alain Chartier, Charles d'Orléans and Villon.

## I. — THE TROUVERES AND THE TROUBADOURS (TWELFTH AND THIRTEENTH CENTURIES).

**Genres of French Origin.** — We should first note several genres which seem

to have developed in the strictly *French* region without any southern influence, or which, at least, had reached definitive form before such influence could alter them.

The *chanson d'histoire* is narrative in character, and may be compared to our modern ballads; it sets forth, weaves and unravels a little drama in several stanzas, of which each ends with the same refrain. We possess a certain number of these which date from the twelfth century, and whose form is definitive and *original* (1).

These *chansons d'histoire* were also called *chansons de toile*, because the women sang them while spinning or weaving. — As types of this genre may be mentioned *Oriour* (2) and *Belle Doette* (3).

The *motet* is a song for several voices, and is of Latin and religious origin.

The *Rotruenge* is a song with a refrain, not narrative; it expresses some more or less personal sentiment. For example: the *rottruenge* of Richard Cœur-de-Lion, a prisoner in Germany (4). (This word comes perhaps from *rote*, the instrument upon which the jugglers accompanied themselves.)

The *serventois* (which must not be confused with the satirical *sirvente* of the Provençaux) seems to have been in the beginning a jocose song.

*L'aube* (or song at daybreak, *alba*), is usually written on the theme of lovers' parting to the song of the lark (Cf. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*).

The *rondeau* is a dance-song, not divided into stanzas, but in which the first part is twice repeated, as in the *triolet*.

The *balette* is the same, and must not be confused with the Provençal *ballade*.

The *lai* (which should not be confused with the narrative *lai*, cf. p. 58) is a song with dissimilar stanzas, upon some subject connected with love. — The *vireli* (become *virelai*) is analogous to the *rondeau*.

The *pastourelle* was one of the most popular mediæval genres. The usual theme of the *pastourelle* is developed in the celebrated piece of Adam de la Halle, *Robin et Marion* (5).

The *chanson de croisade* appears under three forms: sometimes it is a war-song with a refrain, a lyrical exhortation to fight the infidels; sometimes a love-song, the lament of a wife or of a betrothed maiden whose knight is on a crusade; sometimes it is a knight who sorrows for the lady left at home (6).

**Genres of Provençal Origin.** — Lyric poetry, characterised by more learning and refinement, was developed, from the end of the eleventh century, in the

(1) "In these we no longer find," says G. Paris, "the prolixity and banality of expression which too often tire us (in the *chanson de geste*). The characters, usually numbering two or three at most, are rapidly sketched in some characteristic attitude, and exchange but few words, which are however full of the feeling which animates them. The scene of the poem is indicated in a word or two, and along with this extreme conciseness, a few details are, on the contrary, presented more fully, and give to the figures and to the framework a striking relief. It would be difficult to surpass the grace and energy of several of these little compositions, to which their refrain, vaguely fitted to the theme, and often somewhat strange, like popular refrains, adds still more poetic charm." G. PARIS, *Litt. franç. au moyen âge*, § 118.

(2) *Chrestomathie* of G. PARIS, p. 278.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 57.

(4) *Chrestomathie* of G. PARIS, p. 283.

(5) *Chrestomathie* of G. PARIS, p. 291, and of M. CLÉDAT, p. 330: Cf. AUBERTIN, p. 92. — Cf. Chapter on *La Comédie au moyen âge*.

(6) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 24. — *Chrestomathie* of M. L. SUDRE, p. 137.





A MINNESINGER : HILBOLT VON SWANEGREOI

*From a German miniature of the XIII century.*

The Minnesingers, in the German language, were the Poets of Love.

south of France. This poetry was not written in the dialect known now as *provençal*, but in another dialect of the *langue d'oc*, the *limousin*, which was adopted as their literary medium by all the southern poets. The centre of this cult was Toulouse, whose counts were patrons of the *gai saber* and were often poets themselves. The war of the Albigenses broke out suddenly and ruined this brilliant civilisation.

The genres peculiar to the south were :

The *salut d'amour*, a sort of epistle without fixed rules.

The *tençon*, a dispute between two poets upon some question of gallantry ; one variety of this genre is the *jeu-parti* (1).

The *sirvente*, satirical or war-song ; the *ballade*, with three couplets followed by a refrain, ending with an *envoi*.

The *chanson courtoise*, in which the poet expresses his own sentiments, and which is composed of three stanzas, only two of which have the same form.

The *sotte chanson*, which is a parody of the preceding.

In all this poetry appears the *amour courtois*, a conventional sentiment which we have already pointed out in the *romances of the Round Table*. The poet sings his own love, reserved and patient, for a lady who accepts the homage, but with an ever-ready pride, and who exacts every sacrifice from the wooer. This kind of love is regarded as the source of all the virtues, and can only be addressed to a worthy object. This is the theory of *love founded upon esteem*, which, after having influenced Spanish literature, inspired the tragedies of Corneille. The idea gives rise throughout all these little poems to a complicated, fine spun, almost mystic psychology. Despite its obscurities and exaggerations, this analysis of the heart is ingenious and piquant.

**Provençal Influence.** — Now, *provençal* poetry exercised, from the second half of the twelfth century, a very profound influence upon the poetry of the north. The two daughters of Aliénor de Guienne, Marie and Aélis, married respectively Henri I., Count de Champagne and Thibaut de Blois, his brother. Aliénor was the grand-daughter of Guillaume IX., Count de Poitou and Duke d'Aquitaine, illustrious patron of the troubadours and himself a distinguished poet ; and she must have transmitted to her daughters his taste for the *gai saber*. We know, in fact, that under Marie the court of Champagne became a center of *courtoisie* and literature, as we have already mentioned in speaking of Chrétien de Troyes. Aélis, on her part, encouraged and patronised the *trouveres*, whom she must have led to know and imitate *provençal* poetry. Finally, Aliénor had introduced the taste for *provençal* things, for some years, even into the court

(1) The *envois* of these *jeux-partis*, wrongly interpreted, gave rise to the legend of the *cours d'amour*, where, it was supposed, these pieces were recited before a sort of tribunal composed of ladies, who passed judgment upon the dispute between the two poets (cf. *Journal des savants*, Oct. et Déc., 1888).

of France. After her divorce, the new queen, who was the sister of the Count de Champagne and of the Count de Blois, had carried on this influence. During a whole century, from the end of the twelfth to the end of the thirteenth, part of the poetry of the north was inspired by *l'amour courtois*, while the other part remained faithful to its origin.

**Principal Lyric Poets. — The Troubadours.** — We shall first name a few troubadours, who were, for the most part, more ancient than the trouveres :

*Guillaume IX.*, Count de Poitiers and Duke d'Aquitaine ;

*Jofroy Rudel*, Prince de Blaye, who, falling in love with the Countess de Tripoli merely on the fame of her beauty and virtues, went on a crusade in 1147, and reached Tripoli seriously ill, where he died under the eyes of the countess. This romantic and veracious story, entirely characteristic of *l'amour courtois*, has been dramatised by Edmond Rostand, in his *La Princesse lointaine* (1) ;

*Bernard de Ventadour* took the name of his patron, the Viscount de Ventadour in Limousin, sang the Viscountess de Ventadour, and then Aliénor de Guienne ; he attached himself later to the person of Raymond V, Count de Toulouse, and died in a monastery. In the twelfth century he was considered the first of the troubadours.

However, *Bertrand de Born* (1145-1215), Lord of Hautefort in Limousin, was better known ; he celebrated war and love. He was mixed up in the quarrels between the sons of Henry II. Plantagenet, and took the part of Henry le Jeune (2) against Richard ; upon the death of Henry he became reconciled with Richard, whom he defended, in his turn, against Philippe-Auguste. His most beautiful poems are *sirventes*, of a singularly violent satirical tone, but which breathe also lyrical passion, in the fullest sense of the word (3).

**The trouveres.** — Among the trouveres of the north, the following should be mentioned ;

*Conon de Béthune* (died 1220), frequented the court of Champagne, and belonged to a group of *poètes courtois* who were inspired by Marie, daughter of Aliénor. He engaged in the third and fourth crusades, and Villehardouin, in his *Conquête de Constantinople*, attributes to him discourses as courageous as they were eloquent (4) ;

*Gui II.*, Lord of Couci (died 1204), fellow soldier of Conon in the fourth crusade, has less power and more grace (5) ;

*Blondel de Nesle* (end of the XII century) is he whom legend has made the faithful friend of Richard Cœur-de-Lion ;

*Gace Brulé* (died at the beginning of the XIII century), a knight of Champagne, has elegance and pleasing rhythms (6) ;

*Jean Bodel* (died 1207 ?) of Arras, (known especially as epic poet by his *Chanson des Saisnes*, and as dramatic poet by his *Jeu de Saint-Nicolas*), wrote a *Congé*, a lyrical piece in which he bade farewell to his friends on leaving Arras to enter a leper-house (7) ;

(1) Performed at the Renaissance Theatre, Paris, April 5, 1895.

(2) Dante, in his *Inferno*, Book XXVIII, refers to Bertrand de Born " who gave bad advice to the young king. "

(3) With regard to the other troubadours of Aquitaine, Languedoc, Saintonge, Auvergne, Provence, the Roussillon, see L. CLÉDAT's *La Poésie lyrique et satirique au moyen âge* (Lecène et Oudin, 1893), pp. 100-146.

(4) Read a *Chanson de Croisade* by Conon de Béthune in the *Chrestomathie* of M. CLÉDAT, p. 335.

(5) *Chrestomathie* of M. CLÉDAT, p. 337.

(6) *Chrestomathie* of M. CLÉDAT, p. 341.

(7) *Id.*, p. 339.

*Thibaut IV. de Champagne* (died 1253) is as celebrated for his exploits as for his verses. He took part in the crusade against the Albigenses, and in the coalition of the nobility against Blanche of Castille, who was regent during the minority of Louis IX. Blanche, with one glance, had won his submission, and Thibault wrote verses to her of a *courtois* delicacy amounting to affectation. He also wrote *Chansons de croisade, tençons*, and *pastourelles* (1);

*Rutebeuf*, already mentioned, ranks among the lyric poets of the thirteenth century with a large number of poems of a personal tone, which prove him, as we have said, a direct ancestor of Villon (2);

*Colin Muset* (end of the thirteenth century) is the type of the poor *trouvere*, obliged to appeal to the generosity of his patrons; on account of his condition, as well as by the lovable and witty grace of his songs, he is comparable to Marot (3);

Finally must be mentioned *Adam de la Halle* (died 1288), whom we shall consider later as dramatic poet, and who sang his fireside and wrote a *Congé*.

The vogue of *courtoise* poetry seems to have ended at the beginning of the fourteenth century; Rutebeuf and Colin Muset emphasize the change, one by his animation and earnestness, the other by his facile gracefulness and clarity, both by their more personal and candid inspiration.

## II. — LYRICISM IN THE FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURIES.

We have said that the Middle Ages proper end at the close of the thirteenth century. The poets whom we shall now consider belong to that intermediate period, difficult to define, which lies between the accession of the Valois and the beginning of the Renaissance (1328 to 1500, about). However, we shall connect with the sixteenth century those *grands rhétoriciens*, some of whom date from the end of the fifteenth century, but who were the immediate predecessors of Marot.

**Characteristics.** — It may be said in general that the lyricism of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is characterized, in subject, by a more personal, more true and sincere inspiration; but in form, on the contrary, by the tyranny of fixed forms (the *ballade*, *rondeau*, *chant-royal*, etc.), which continued to become more intricate up to the time of Marot. Exception should be made of Villon, for, though the *testament* is a conventional genre, it left more freedom to the poet.

(1) *Chrestomathie* of M. CLÉDAT, p. 343.

(2) *Id.*, p. 350.

(3) With regard to Colin Muset, cf. J. BÉDIER, *De Nicolao Museto* (1893), a Latin thesis, followed by a critical edition of his poems. — *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 59; *Chrestomathie* of M. CLÉDAT, p. 348.



**LYRICAL POETS OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.** — We should mention briefly *Guillaume de Machaut* (1300-1377), author of the *Voir dit* (*Histoire vraie*), a love romance; *Jean Froissart*, too famous as a chronicler to have preserved his fame as poet. His *Epinette amoureuse*, his *Débat du cheval et du lévrier*, his romance in verse, *Méliador*, his *Paradis d'amour*, *Dit du Florin*, etc., are sufficient to have made the fame of any other poet. His charming *ballade*,



FRONTISPIECE OF *La Cité des Dames* BY CHRISTINE DE PISAN

*From a miniature in a manuscript of the xv century.*

In her study on the left Christine de Pisan is visited by Prudence, Force and Temperance; on the right she places the first stones of the "Cité des Dames".

"*Sur toutes fleurs j'aime la marguerite*", inserted in his *Paradis d'amour*, is still often quoted.

**Eustache Deschamps** (1345-1405) performed important services at court: he was royal messenger, *huissier d'armes* to Charles V, equerry to the Dauphin, bailiff of Senlis, Master of waters and forests at Villers-Cotterets, Royal Treasurer. He travelled widely, as far as Bohemia and Hungary. He knew all the great men of one of the most troubled periods of French history: Charles V., Charles VI., Du Guesclin, the Duke Louis d'Orléans; he saw at close range the English war and the Parisian insurrection. So, in his immense work

of 80.000 verses, the most interesting pieces are historical poems. "These are", says Petit de Julleville, "real historical documents; there should be a separate collection made of them, in which they would be classified in their natural, that is chronological, order. In this we should see Eustache Deschamps, official poet of France and the reigning dynasty, celebrating one by one all the important events, as later on Malherbe did under Henry IV. and Louis XIII. ... He is the historiographer in verse of the king and the kingdom for nearly forty years (1)".

The most famous of these historical poems is the ballad. *On the death of Bertrand du Guesclin* (2). He also composed a large number of moral and satirical poems, in which he attacked, after the manner of Rutebeuf, the Church, the State, the financiers and especially the women. His work includes some witty ballades (*Le Chat et la Souris*) (3). Finally, he left a sort of *Art Poétique*, under the title: *L'art de dictier et de fere chansons, balades, virelais et rondeaux* (1362). Eustache Deschamps' art lacks ease and elegance, but it is concise, and manly; he thinks and reasons; he is more than an author, he is a man.

**LYRIC POETS OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.** — We come first, in the fifteenth century, to *Christine de Pisan* (1363-1431). Daughter of Thomas de Pisan, who was astrologer and physician to Charles V., she was born at Bologna. Widowed at twenty-five years of age, and without fortune, she first wrote verses for her own consolation, then to please the court, and then to gain a living. So she produced much hasty work, written in the taste of her time, and sometimes merely inspired by some passing event. Her principal poetic work is *Le Poème de la Pucelle* (Jeanne d'Arc); but she chiefly owes her reputation to short pieces, *dits moraux* written in the form of *ballades*, *rondeaux*, etc. Some of these will always be quoted (4). Among her works in prose is *La Cité des dames*, which is very interesting for its knowledge of the manners of polite society in the fifteenth century. But her masterpiece, if the word is not too strong, is *Le Livre des faits et bonnes mœurs du roi Charles V*, which classes her among historians, and of which we shall speak elsewhere.

*Alain Chartier* (1386-1449) was a brother of Guillaume Chartier, Bishop of Paris (died 1472). He became attached to the court as secretary to the Dauphin (later Charles VII). His very numerous poems are allegorical, and their prodigious success astonishes us. We may mention: *Le Livre des quatre dames* (a sort of debate, at once *courtois* and patriotic on the battle of Agincourt) (5).

(1) JULLEVILLE, *Hist. de la litt. française*, t. II, p. 351, Colin.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 62.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 61. — Read two other ballades in the *Chrestomathie* of G. PARIS, p. 295.

(4) G. PARIS, *Chrestomathie*, p. 304; L. SUDRE, p. 148.

(5) Four ladies have lost their knights in the battle of Agincourt: the first has been killed, the second taken prisoner, the third has run away, and the fourth has disappeared. The point is to know which is the most unhappy of the four ladies. (Cf *Chrestomathie* of CLÉDAT, p. 369.)

As prose writer, Alain Chartier is less conventional, and merits for several reasons an honourable place in French literature. First of all, he expresses the most generous patriotic sentiments in his *Quadriloge invectif* (1422) (1), and in



FRONTISPIECE OF THE *Quadriloge Invectif* OF ALAIN CHARTIER  
From a miniature taken from a manuscript of the xv century.

his *Livre de l'Espérance* (1429), written just before the deliverance of Orléans by Jeanne d'Arc (2). Alain Chartier is also the author of the *Curial* (*l'homme de cour*), which is a powerful ironic satire upon the courtier. The author addresses

(1) *Quadriloge* means a conversation among four characters; *invectif*, containing invectives. The characters are: *France*, and the three orders, the people, nobility and clergy.

(2) With regard to Jeanne d'Arc, Chartier wrote a letter in Latin to the Emperor Sigismund, in which he said, "This girl is not of the earth; she is sent from Heaven."



it to his brother Thomas Chartier, and urges him to leave the court, where he himself has lived a long time, and of which he knows all the troubles. It is useful to compare this portrait of the courtiers of the fifteenth century with certain passages from Joachim du Bellay, from Montaigne, Balzac, La Bruyère; Saint-Simon, etc. It is, in fact, a document. Chartier's style is oratorical, full of action and fire; and his language reminds one of Balzac. His contemporaries surnamed him the *Père de l'éloquence française*. It is recounted that Marguerite d'Écosse, dauphine of France, kissed the lips of the old poet while he was sleeping; but this legend is open to question. But it is certain that Alain Chartier enjoyed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries an immense renown.

**Charles d'Orléans** (1394-1465). — Son of Louis, duc d'Orléans, and of Valentine de Milan, and father of Louis XII., Charles was involved in his youth in the most terrible political catastrophes. Taken prisoner at Agincourt in 1415, he was taken to England, where he was kept for twenty five years in the closest captivity. Delivered in 1440, he retired to Blois, where he formed around him an agreeable and intellectual court. During his years of imprisonment, and while at Blois, Charles d'Orléans composed a number of short poems, *ballades*, *rondeaux*, *chansons*; but after his death he was forgotten, and the MS. of his poems was not discovered and published until 1734.

With Charles d'Orléans, we return to the *courtiose* poetry of a Thibaut de Champagne, and there are but slight traces in Charles' work of the important and painful events which had affected his destiny. Only a few of his pieces on the subject of peace, and of longing for his country, invite historical commentary: for instance, the *ballade* XXIV., whose refrain is, *De veoir France que mon cœur aimer doit*, and the *ballade* XXV.: *Priez pour paix le vrai trésor de joie* (1). The theme of all the other poems is the conventional love of the troubadours and the trouveres, with all their usual allegory. But Charles d'Orléans introduced into this subject a novel grace, a melancholy retinence, a courtly *affectation*, which recalls Marot, Voiture and the poets of the eighteenth century. Thus, that charming *ballade* whose refrain is *J'aimasse mieux de bouche vous le dire* could have been recited at the court of François I., or at the hôtel de Rambouillet.

Who does not know those short pieces, delicate in substance, so ingenious and perfect in form: *Le Temps a laissé son manteau...; Les fourriers d'esté sont venuz...; Dieu! qu'il la fail bon regarder, La gracieuse, bonne et belle!...; Petit mercier, petit pannier!... Je meurs de soif auprès (auprès) de la fontaine...; Levez ces couvrechefs plus hault, Qui trop couvrent ces beaux visages... etc.* (2).

The personality of the poet appears, with reserve, in a few melancholy pieces on the flight of time (*Par les fenestres de mes yeulx, Au temps passé quand regardoye...*), on solitude (*Laissez-moi penser à mon aise...*). Charles d'Orléans did not

(1) Read these two ballads in AUBERTIN'S *Choix de textes*, etc., p. 198.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 34; 2nd cycle, p. 64.





CHARLES D'ORLÉANS PRISONER AT THE TOWER OF LONDON  
From a miniature taken from a manuscript of the xv century.

seek in poetry merely a careless distraction : he was a born poet. Or, rather, he is to the true poet what the chaser is to the sculptor, the miniaturist to the painter. He could have, himself, written upon his MSS. : *Enamels and Cameos*.

### III. — FRANÇOIS VILLON (1431-1480).

**Biography.** — François des Loges, or de Montcorbier, whose father was a native of Bourbons, and his mother of Anjou, was born at Paris, in 1431, and adopted by Guillaume de Villon, chaplain of Saint-Benoit. The child took the name of his " more than father ", and studied diligently, although he says (*Hélas ! si j'eusse étudié, Au temps de ma jeunesse folle !...*). He became a student at the Faculty of Arts (1) intending to be a cleric ; and he was Master of Arts in 1452 at the age of twenty-one. Gaston Paris thinks, with reason, that his remorse must be referable to the period which followed. He then entered either the Faculty of Theology or the Faculty of Decrees (canon law).

At this period the students at the University were in perpetual conflict with royal justice. Villon must have taken part in several uprisings between 1451 and 1454. He tells us, in his *Grand Testament* (78 th stanza) that he had written a *Roman du Pet-au-Diable*, the description of a burlesque frolic (2) ; he joined his comrades in unhooking shop signs, and in stealing from the shop-windows. In a word, he became one of those students who are facetious and roguish, a witty and dangerous vagabond, better known in the taverns than at the University. There is usually published at the end of Villon's works a short poem entitled : *Les Repues franchises de François Villon et de ses compagnons* (3) ; a *repue franche* is a repast which costs nothing ; tripe is stolen from the tripe-shop, bread from the baker, roast meat from the cook-shop. For Villon to have become the hero of this burlesque code of thievery, he must without doubt have left behind him a sad reputation.

On June 5, 1455, Villon quarrelled with a priest, Philippe Sermoise, and killed him. He took to flight, but later asked for pardon and obtained it : *Lettres de rémission* were accorded him in June, 1456. It is not known where he lived during this voluntary exile. On his return to Paris he doubtless again frequented a very dubious society, and descended a degree lower by associating with professional thieves. He and two bandits, Colin de Cayeux and Gui Tabarie, broke into the Collège de Navarre and stole. It is said that it was then he composed his *Petit Testament*, in the beginning of which he announces his departure for Angers, where he wished to go to see his uncle. He set out. The theft

(1) The Faculty of Arts corresponded approximately to the modern French Faculty of Letters ; *maître ès arts* was the equivalent of *licencié ès lettres*.

(2) G. PARIS, *François Villon*, p. 26.

(3) Edit. P. JANET, p. 178.

was discovered (1457), and Tabarie denounced him as one of his accomplices. Nothing is known about Villon during the years 1457-1461; he is said to have been received by Charles d'Orléans at the Château de Blois. In 1458 he was in Bourbonnais, after which he seems to have joined a band of brigands, the *Coquillards*, in whose jargon he wrote several pieces that are difficult to interpret. One fine day he allowed himself to be captured, and in 1461 he was imprisoned at Meun-sur-Loire, by the request of the Bishop of Orléans, Thibault d'Assigny. Colin de Cayeux had been hanged, and Villon feared the same fate. Happily for him, Louis XI, who had just been crowned, passed through Meun and set him at liberty.

It was in this same year 1461, *en l'an trentième de son âge*, that Villon wrote his *Grand Testament*. He seemed to have completely reformed, and expressed sentiments of shame and repentance. Nevertheless, in 1462 he was imprisoned



A CLASS-ROOM IN THE TIME OF FRANÇOIS VILLON  
From a miniature taken in a manuscript of the xv century.

in the Châtelet and sentenced to be hanged. He then wrote his admirable *Balade des pendus* (*Frères humains qui après nous vivrez...*) (1). But again he was set free, on January 5, 1463, and banished for ten years from the city of Paris.

After 1463 all trace of Villon is lost. Rabelais tells us that "master François Villon, in his old age, retired to Saint-Maixent in Poitou, under the patronage of a good man, abbot of the place. There, to entertain the people he undertook to have the Passion played in *Poitevin* language and manners" (2). The date of his death is unknown. The first edition of his works, in Paris, is dated 1489.

**Le Petit Testament.** — This poem of forty stanzas also bears the title of *lais* (3). It

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 73.

(2) RABELAIS, liv. IV, p. 12.

(3) *Lais* or *legs*; the form *lais* is the best. The word comes from the verb *laisser* and not *léguer*. Moreover, the correct pronunciation of the word *legs* is *lai*.



was a genre then in vogue, and more or less analogous to the *congé*. We know the *congés* of Jean Bodel and of Adam de la Halle, and the *testaments* of Jean de Meun and of Jean de Regnier (1432).

Villon is about to go to Angers, and is not certain of coming back. So he makes his will. He leaves to Guillaume de Villon, his adoptive father, his *bruit*, that is to say, his fame; to her whom he loves, and who disdains him, his heart; to various persons, the celebrated shop-signs of the quarter: to Jean Trouvé, butcher, the *Mouton*, the *Bœuf couronné* and the *Vache*; to the captain of the watch, the *Heaume* (helmet); to the night archers, the *Lanterne*; to Maître Jacques Regnier, the *Pomme de Pin* (the sign of a wineshop, which would seem to indicate that Regnier spent too much of his time there); he leaves money to *trois petits enfants tout nus, Pauvres orphelins dépourvus*, whose names he gives (and these are three abominable usurers); different things, such as gloves, caps, hose, diamonds, to real or imaginary friends; to Robert Valée his *braies* (underdrawers), which are held in pawn at the wine-shop of the Trumelières; to his barber the cuttings of his hair; to his shoemaker his old shoes, etc. Then follow a few *lais*, figurative or allegorical, addressed to canons, to his companions in misery, to the curés of Paris, to the monks (1).

Although there are much wit and especially, here and there, excellent touches of realism in *Le Petit Testament*, this work would not have assured Villon's fame; he would have been lost among the crowd of second-rate poets.

**Le Grand Testament.** — In this, though the general framework is analogous, the composition is much more complex. The poem consists of one hundred and seventy-three stanzas, and furthermore includes numerous *ballades* of which some, according to G. Paris, were written some time before 1461, and which the poet had the fortunate idea of enshrining in the best place. It even seems evident that he frequently developed or changed his work so as to introduce the *ballade*, which he intended never to lose. — Stanzas 1-70 form the first part, in which Villon speaks of his imprisonment and of his wasted youth, of the flight of time, and of death which spares no one (2). It is here, after stanza 41, that we find *La Ballade des dames du temps jadis* (refrain: *Mais où sont les neiges d'antan*!) (3), *La Ballade des seigneurs du temps jadis* (refrain: *Mais où est le preux Charlemagne*!). He returns, in stanza 42, to the brevity of youth, and makes *La Belle Heaumière* regret her lost beauty; he, himself, mourns his former loves. — In stanza 70, Villon begins to make his bequests, and this is the second part and a separate poem. — The *lais* of the *Grand Testament* are less burlesque than those of *Le Petit*, yet are often ironical: to Guillaume de Villon he leaves his *library*; to the mendicant friars a goose, whose bones he gives to the sick in the hospitals; to Jean le Loup, thief, a dog to catch the ducks in the moats of Paris, and a cloak to hide them in; arms to a quarrelsome monk; to his mother he leaves a *ballade à Notre-Dame* (4), etc. — But the chief interest of the *Grand Testament* does not lie in these legacies, the allusions of which are obscure and have now, possibly, lost all their point, but in the moral reflexions which each one incites. Thus in stanza 149 Villon describes himself in the charnel-house of the cemetery of the Innocents (5), and reverts to the theme of death: he returns to this again in the last stanzas, where he gives instructions for his burial (stanzas 163-173). One last *ballade* serves for conclusion.

**Originality of Villon.** — It is an exaggeration to say that Villon was the first

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 29.

(2) — — 2nd cycle, p. 68.

(3) — — 2nd cycle, p. 70.

(4) — — 1st cycle, p. 32.

(5) — — 2nd cycle, p. 72.



to write *personal* poetry. Before him, several lyric poets whom we have named — particularly Jean Bodel, Rutebeuf, Eustache Deschamps, Colin Muset, Alain Chartier — with conventional framework and allegories, have spoken of their lives, of their loves and their regrets. But it may truly be said that Villon had a more marked personality, a more human soul, and especially a more sincere tone.

This unsatisfactory student, this vagabond, this *coquillard*, relapsing into crime and three times imprisoned, twice on the point of being hanged, was a poet in the most modern sense of the word; he was not guided by reason, but by sensibility, which explains both his mistakes and his remorse. Of this fact he is the victim; but if his crimes are due to it, he owes it also his repentance and his tears. So much for the substance of his poems. And nothing appeals more to our sympathies than a poor human soul who knows and has tasted the beauty of virtue, who is drawn by his own weakness to evil, awakes with a shudder of disgust, trembling lest he should fall again, and who combines his despair, like Heine and de Musset, with irony.

In quality, also, Villon is a great poet: he sees and he depicts. He does not seek new or ingenious things, which is characteristic of the mediocre and artificial poet. He rejuvenates unconsciously, by the natural force of his feeling and his vision, the most common themes. What could be more ordinary, indeed, than reflexions on the flight of time, regrets for lost youth, the pang of death? But it is exactly by their way of treating such themes that we recognise the real poets. Villon in the charnel-house of the Innocents



Épitaſſe dudit Villon  
freres humains qui apres no<sup>s</sup> blues  
Nayez les cueurs contre no<sup>s</sup> endurcis  
Car ſe pitie de no<sup>s</sup> pouurez auez  
Dieu en aura pluſtoſt de vous mercis  
Vous nous voies cy atachez cinq ſip  
Quat de la char q̄ trop au<sup>s</sup> nous nourrie  
Elleſt piera deuoree et pourrie  
et no<sup>s</sup> ſcs os deuen<sup>t</sup> cedies a pouſſie  
De noſtre mal perſonne ne ſen ne  
Mais puez dieu que tous nous dueil  
le abſoul dieu giii.

THE BALLAD OF THE HANGED MEN

From an edition of the works of Villon  
printed in 1490.

equals Shakespeare when Hamlet speaks in the cemetery at Elsinore, and Bossuet *ouvrant un tombeau devant la cour*. We see all that Villon wishes us to see; the outlines are exact, picturesque, full of colour. "He knew how to paint," says G. Paris, "old women cowering around their small fire of flax, and the women squatting in the church on the folds of their gowns, and the model scholars with their thumbs stuck in their belts, and honest Jean Cotard reeling to bed, and the skulls piled up in the charnel of the Innocents, and the skeletons of hanged men balancing in the wind from the gallows at Montfaucon (1)."

**Fame of Villon.** — The first edition of Villon's works appeared in 1489. It was often reprinted until Marot's edition in 1533, which corrected and commented Villon's work—sometimes happily, sometimes rather naively—and which met with great success (2).

Villon has never been forgotten. Much appreciated in the sixteenth century, still known and read in the seventeenth (cf. Boileau's *Art poétique*), and in the eighteenth, Villon profited more than any other poet, more even than Ronsard, by the romantic reaction. His Bohemian life, the variety of his style, which unites the *grotesque* to the *sublime*, his daring realism, all combine to establish his position as an ancestor.

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(1) G. PARIS, *F. Villon*, p. 154.

(2) In the seventeenth century Villon continued to be read after Marot's text. After 1723 various editions appeared, some of which showed philological and historical progress. But the definitive edition is now A. Longnon's, which appeared in 1892 (Lemerre): M. Longnon has contributed as much to elucidate the biography of Villon as to purify and define his text.



THEATRICAL DECORATIONS FOR A MYSTERY REPRESENTED AT VALENCIENNES IN 1547

*From a miniature of the middle of the XVI century.*

"The Theatre or rough masonry work designed as it was when the Mystery of the Passion of our Saviour was played."

Paradise	Nazareth	The Temple	Jerusalem	The Palace	The Golden Door	Le Limbe des	Hell
A Hall				The Bishop's House		Pères	The Sea

## CHAPTER VII.

### RELIGIOUS DRAMA IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

#### MIRACLE-PLAYS AND MYSTERIES.

##### SUMMARY

**RELIGIOUS DRAMATIC** works of the Middle Ages have to be replaced, more than any other branch of literature, in their own milieu. They cannot be compared to the **Greek drama**, except that both originated in a system of worship.

1. **FROM THE XI TO THE XIV CENTURY.** — **LITURGICAL DRAMAS AND MIRACLE-PLAYS.** — Church ceremonies are developed and give rise to liturgical dramas, the principal examples of which are the *Vierges Folles*, the *Prophètes du Christ* and especially the *Drame d'Adam* (XII century), which is no longer presented in the choir of the Church, but under the porch. In the thirteenth century, *Le Jeu de Saint Nicolas*, by Jean Bodel, is remarkable for its mélange of epic, religious and familiar scenes. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, **Miracle-plays** are given, drawn from the lives of the Saints, above all from legends relating to the Virgin. Among these are *Le Miracle de Théophile*, by Rutebeuf (XIII century) and *Les Miracles de Notre-Dame* (XIV century); these pieces have plots which are often ingenious, and contain curious information about the manners of the times. A national drama could have been constructed from them.

2. **XV CENTURY.** — **THE MYSTERIES.** — There are no professional actors; the **Mysteries** are played by brotherhoods of amateurs, the chief of which is

the *Confrères de la Passion*, at Paris. The scene represents several places, side by side. — The *Mysteries* are divided into three cycles : 1, The *Old Testament*; 2, the *New Testament*, which includes the most celebrated of the *Mysteries*, and the *Passion* of which we have several versions; the best are those of Arnould Gréban (1452) and of Jean Michel (1486); 3, the *Cycle des Saints*. — To these are added a few profane *Mysteries*, among others the *Siège d'Orléans* (1439).

The *Mysteries* were prohibited in 1548, by decree of Parliament, as this naïve mixture of the sacred with the profane was beginning to scandalize both the spectators and the clergy.



DECORATED LETTER  
from a manuscript of the  
xv century

**general character.** — In order to understand mediæval religious drama, one must, more than for any other genre, take account of its *time*, its *milieu* and its *object*. We must remember that these representations were a complement of the ceremonies of the church; that they were intended, first of all, to edify the spectators, and the mental attitude of those spectators can scarcely be compared with that of our contemporary public.

Let us not forget, furthermore, that this religious theatre was hardly a *theatre* at all. Neither the scenery, accessories, costumes nor actors resembled what we see nowadays. Those were spectacles *out of the ordinary*, given in broad

daylight, on a stage lacking anything which might create illusion, played by *clerics*, citizens, workmen, who, their *part* being over for the moment, went to sit on benches, facing the public, until it should be resumed. Only the actors representing Christ and the Virgin wore conventional costumes, only the devils were disguised and made up; the rest were dressed like the onlookers or like the archers of the watch.

So true it is that this drama depended essentially upon a *state of mind*, upon a momentary combination of circumstances, that hardly had it reached its full development when it disappeared. In 1548, a decree of Parliament forbade the representation of *Mysteries*; and this act of authority was so legitimate, so well founded on existing necessities, that neither the church nor the dramatic authors ever called it in question.

**Greek Tragedy and the Mysteries.** — There is no exact comparison between the origin of Greek tragedy and that of French religious drama.



Greek tragedy resulted from the evolution of a lyric genre, the *dithyramb* sung at the feasts of Bacchus. In France, the *Mystère* was evolved from certain ceremonies of the Catholic religion.

Of the dithyramb Greek tragedy preserved only its high and impassioned spirit, the legend of Bacchus not continuing for long to be the chief theme.



THE INTERIOR OF A THEATRE, A STAGE, IN THE XV CENTURY

From a miniature painted by Jean Fouquet [1415 (?) - 1480].

In this miniature, which represents the Martyrdom of Sainte Apolline, everything figures the representation of a mystery play. The picture is taken from the stage. The "stands" where the spectators are, are extemporized. On the left of the benches sit the angels who are leading up to the sky. On the right opens the mouth of Leviathan, dominated by Satan.

As soon as the new genre acquired form and individuality, it admitted all the gods and all the heroes. The subject of the *Mystery*, even when represented in public places, was essentially the Nativity, the Passion and the Resurrection; and the *Miracle-play*, though more free, was always consecrated to the Virgin or the Saints. In a word, the profane element, historical or imagined, was never substituted for the religious in these plays, when their form became

definitive. There was a *Mystère d'Orléans* and a *Mystère de saint Louis*; but these were exceptions, merely experiments by men of letters.

## I. — FROM THE ELEVENTH TO THE FOURTEENTH CENTURIES. LITURGICAL DRAMAS AND MIRACLE-PLAYS.

**Liturgical Drama.** — “ We may place the birth of liturgical drama shortly after the year 1000. During this time, the people’s love for their rejuvenated and embellished churches was constantly growing; for them there were never enough feast-days, never long enough services. Having no other public pleasures, they were never tired of those supplied by the Church. This hunger of the faithful, willingly fed by the clergy, who were naturally favorable to this pious taste, even when carried to excess, could only be satisfied by further developing the liturgy. The services were prolonged by numerous and constantly longer interpolations, and these were soon varied by the introduction of drama (4)... »

These interpolations were at first *tropes*, that is to say short questions, in Latin, followed by short responses, also in Latin: the text being always in prose, and simply liturgical.

Then they inserted in the liturgical text short Latin poems, whether hymns sung by a choir, or pieces to be recited by some special person. Finally, all this resulted in real dramas, half French (or provençal), half Latin, without subjecting this use of the two languages, and the passage from one to the other, to any rule whatever.

**Principal Liturgical Dramas.** — It was in this manner that they had, at Christmas, the drama of the *Shepherds*, the scene taken directly from the Gospel, with the manger, the Virgin and the Child, the angel announcing the Nativity to the shepherds, a choir of children up in the roof of the church singing the *Gloria*, and the shepherds advancing and adoring (XI century).

On Christmas Day they presented the drama of *l'Epoux*, or *Les Vierges sages et les Vierges folles*. In these, provençal is found side by side with Latin. The Gospel (St. Matthew, XXIV, 1-13), is presented in very well arranged scenes. At the denouement, the foolish Virgins are seized by demons and hurled into hell (XI century).

The *Prophètes du Christ* exists in several forms. The most ancient is a sort of commentary on an apocryphal sermon by Saint Augustine, evoking successively all those who announced the birth and the mission of Christ: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Moses, David, Habakkuk, Simeon, Zachariah, Elisabeth, John the Baptist, Virgil, Nebuchadnezzar and the Sybil. The celebrant recited a part of the sermon, and to his appeal each of the prophets replied in Latin verse. — In the twelfth century this drama was altered and added to. In this Balaam appears, on his she-ass, and the she-ass speaks. This seems to have been the origin of the *fête de l'âne* (see the chapter on *Comedy*).

We possess other liturgical dramas on the *Massacre des Innocents*, *Les saintes Femmes*

(4) PETIT DE JULLEVILLE, *Les Mystères*, I, 21.

au tombeau, *La Conversion de saint Paul*, *La Résurrection de Lazare*, etc. With these must be connected four *Miracle-plays* about saint Nicolas in Latin verse (1).

**Le Drame d'Adam** (XII century). — This was the first dramatic work that was not presented in the church. It formed the transitional step between the *liturgical drama* of the eleventh century and the *mysteries*, properly so-called. The text is in anglo-norman dialect, in French verse; the rubrics (or directions to the actors, probably *cleres*) are in Latin (2). According to these directions, the drama was played before the door of the church. The manuscript contains full details concerning the scenery, the costumes, the entrances and exits, the



PROLOGUE OF THE MYSTERY OF THE PASSION

Represented at Valenciennes in 1547.

From a contemporary miniature. Hubert Caillaux, a painter, who has painted the illustrations of each chapter of the book, was also an actor in this Mystery.

“stage business” of the actors. This piece can be reconstituted exactly as it was played in the twelfth century.

**Analysis.** — As in the mysteries of the fifteenth century, the scene represents various places: paradise, earth, hell. The first part takes place in paradise. There is foliage and fruit. The Almighty is represented, clothed in a dalmatic, and causes Adam to appear before him in a red tunic and Eve in a white robe, to whom He gives strict injunctions. Demons, escaping from hell, gambol on the stage and even among the ranks of the spectators; they approach paradise, and Satan enters. In a scene which is really clever, and reveals in this anonymous author of the twelfth century, a precursor of our best dramatists, Satan, who has failed with Adam, flatters and seduces Eve. He arouses in her, one after the other, coquetry, greediness, pride, the desire for knowledge, jealousy; then he disappears. Adam comes on, and rebukes his wife for having listened to the tempter. But Eve, approaching the tree, sees there a serpent *construit avec art et qui s'enroule autour du tronc*; she listens to the serpent, who whispers in her ear; she

(1) Analyses of these may be found in PETIT DE JULLEVILLE, *Les Mystères*, I, 47 to 68.

(2) The MS. of this drama was discovered at Tours, published in 1854 by M. LUZARCHE and in 1877 by M. PALUSTRE.

picks an apple, tastes it and makes Adam do the same. Immediately, they both realize their mistake, and fall to lamenting. The Almighty appears and drives them out of paradise, at the same time promising them redemption.

The scene then passes to the earth, represented in the centre of the stage. Adam and Eve, with spade and rake, cultivate the soil, and Satan puts thorns and tares in their way. At last they die, and are carried off by devils, who again gambol amongst the spectators. Cain and Abel appear, one dressed in red, the other in white. After a dialogue, Cain kills his brother; both are then conducted into hell, but Abel more slowly because he is to come out again after the Redemption. — In the third act, all the prophets who have announced the birth of the Saviour file past, as in the liturgical drama indicated above. A sermon in verse brings the performance to a close (1).

To the twelfth century, also, belongs a *Redemption*, of which we only possess fragments, among them a prologue in verse which indicates the principal *places* to be represented on the stage, to the number of thirteen.

So, at this period was already completely formed the drama which existed at the end of the fourteenth and in the first half of the fifteenth centuries. From the time of the *cleres* who played the *drame d'Adam* in the twelfth century, to the *Confrères de la Passion*, no important change was made either in the subject or form of this genre.

**Le Jeu de saint Nicolas**, by JEAN BODEL of Arras. — This interesting piece belongs to the thirteenth century, our only example of a branch of dramatic literature which must have been fruitful, as it is not possible that a work like this should have been the only one of its kind.

Jean Bodel, author of the *Chanson des Saisnes*, caused his *Jeu de Saint Nicolas* to be given at Arras probably at the beginning of the thirteenth century, because the *Congé* which he addressed to his fellow citizens when, attacked by leprosy, he was obliged to retire from the world, was dated 1202; he is said to have died about 1205. It is therefore a mistake to suppose that this piece contains allusions to the battle of Mansourah and to Robert d'Artois (1250).

**Analysis.** — The stage, in this drama, represents simultaneously : the palace of a mussulman king (the palace, itself, it seems, is divided into several parts, it being necessary to have a room where the king receives his emirs, a *treasury*, and a prison); a plain where the battle is fought, and a tavern. We learn, from a *prologue*, that the piece is given to celebrate the feast of St. Nicolas. A messenger announces to the king that his kingdom is invaded by Christians; the king consults the idol of Tervagant, and sends his messenger to convoke the emirs and their troupes. This messenger stops on the way at the tavern, where he drinks and plays, and at length arrives with his message, and the emirs respond to the call of their sovereign.

Meanwhile, the Christians, assembled on the *plain*, exhort each other to fight valiantly for the defence of their faith. All join in an invocation, after which a Christian, and then a young knight, speak with truly heroic simplicity, which recalls the best passages in Roland. And we should seek vainly in all the poetry of the Middle Ages to find a

(1) A detailed analysis may be found in PETIT DE JULLEVILLE, *Les Mystères*. I, 81; all the *Chrestomathies* give the scene of the temptation of Eve. Read, in *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 37; and in the *Chrestomathie* of SUPRE, the dialogue between Cain and Abel, p. 59.



more correct use of the Christian marvellous than the apparition of the angel, who first exhorts the knights to fight courageously, and then tells them that they will all die and will all go to paradise. The battle begins, and the prediction is accomplished. Then, above the dead Christians lying on the plain, the angel appears again, pitying and consoling them.

To these sublime scenes succeed others of a more lively and familiar character. An old Christian man has survived and is found by the pagans praying before a statue of St. Nicolas. They lead him before the king, who ridicules his devotion, and would put St. Nicolas to the test. He commands a herald to proclaim that the royal treasury will be left open, guarded only by the statue of the saint. The old man is put in prison, and the angel comes and promises him the conversion of his persecutors.

We are then transported again to the tavern, where the thieves, Cliquet, Pincédès and



THE CRUCIFIXION

Principal scene of the *Mystery of the Passion* represented at Valenciennes in 1547

*From a contemporary miniature painted by Hubert Cuillaux.*

Rasoir, playing and quarrelling in argot, form the most picturesque contrast with the noble poetry of the preceding scenes. They go to the palace, steal the treasure and bring it back to the tavern, where they drink until they are overcome and sleep.—The king, infuriated by the disappearance of the treasure, delivers the old man to the executioner. But, at the same moment, St. Nicolas appears to the sleeping thieves in the tavern, and orders them to take back the stolen money. The old man is saved, and the king and all his subjects converted (1).

**The Miracle-plays** (end of the XIII and XIV centuries). — The name *miracles* was first applied to short narrations in Latin, then in French, which described the intervention of the Virgin or the Saints in human affairs. The most celebrated collection of *Miracle-plays* is that of Gautier de Coinci, who died in 1236, and which comprises 30,000 verses; but several other collections are known.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 74.

From very early times, both clerical and lay authors found subjects in this inexhaustible mine. The feasts of the saints, who were patron saints of brotherhoods, of cities, of churches, the reunions of the *puis Notre-Dame* (1), anniversaries, etc., were so many occasions for edifying and amusing the people, by *dramatizing* narratives familiar to everybody (the sermons of the time are full of *examples*), and which lent themselves wonderfully to a picturesque description of all the *milieux* and of all the social classes. In this depiction of manners, in fact, lies the special interest the *miracles* have for us. Not appropriate in our time for the edification of more enlightened Christians, they constitute, before the *farces*, valuable historical documents.

**Le Miracle de Théophile.** — *Le Miracle de Théophile*, by Rutebeuf (2), must be placed at the end of the thirteenth century. It is short, comprising about seven hundred verses, and is written in the pure dialect of the *Ile-de-France*. It consists of a series of scenes set side by side, rather than connected. Compared to the *Jeu de saint Nicolas*, its art is rudimentary. It is the story of a *clerc*, Théophile, who, robbed of his property by a bishop, denies God and goes to seek a magician, Salatin; Salatin evokes the devil and Théophile enters into a compact with hell: he gives his soul in exchange for his restored riches. Seven years later, Théophile repents and invokes the Virgin, who tears from Satan the pact signed by the unfaithful *clerc*.

Rutebeuf has not made the best of the story; nevertheless, the interview between Satan and Théophile has some value in the seductions of the demon and the man's hesitation; the scene of repentance also has a certain moral interest (3).

**Les Miracles de Notre-Dame.** — We possess a collection of forty *Miracles de Notre-Dame par personnages* of the fourteenth century. These miracles were surely given by the *puis*, which arranged competitions for lyric poetry and dramatic representations. It is known that there were *puis* at Amiens, Arras, Rouen, etc. (4). These forty *miracles* are written in the dialect of the *Ile-de-France*; and it is evidently the collection, the *repertory*, of a single *pui*. The authors have drawn their subject from the most diverse sources: the *miracles* of Gautier de Coinci, those of Jean Le Marchant, the *chansons de geste*, legends of the saints, romances of adventure, and even from history. But the climax is always brought about by the intervention of the Virgin, who appears borne by angels, and ascends again into Heaven.

The chief *Miracles de Notre-Dame*, which it does not seem to us necessary to analyse here, and the titles of which will suffice, are: *Berthe, femme du roi Pépin* (taken from the *chanson de geste* of Adenet le roi); *Robert le Diable* (also taken from an epic poem); *La Conversion de Clovis* (which comes perhaps from some Merovingian epic now lost); these are all on historical subjects. Others are romantic, sometimes founded on legends of the saints, but often resembling stories of crimes, or well-known *criminal cases*. Nearly all these anecdotes appear, as we have said, in the collections of *miracle-plays* under the form of narratives. Examples: *Comment la femme du roi de Portugal tua le sénéchal du roi et sa propre cousine, dont elle fut condamnée à être brûlée, et Notre-Dame l'en*

(1) The *puis* were a kind of academie society under the protection of the Virgin.

(2) For Rutebeuf, see p. 86.

(3) Read the prayer of Théophile, in SUDRE'S *Chrestomathie*, p. 67.

(4) According to PETIT DE JULLEVILLE (*Mystères*, I, 116), the word *pui* or *puy* means not only mountain (cf. Puy-de-Dôme), but an *eminence* of any kind; it must have been used to designate the platform where the competitors delivered their verses. According to G. PARIS, the word must have come from the city of Puy-en-Velay, where these competitions originated. (*Litt. au moyen âge*, § 127).

*garantit; Comment un enfant ressuscita entre les bras de sa mère que l'on voulait brûler parce qu'elle l'avait noyé, etc.*

At this period may be connected with the *Miracle-plays* ***l'Histoire de Grisélidis***, which Boccaccio, in this same fourteenth century, relates in his *Decameron*. The French piece is well constructed, and seems to have been drawn from the same source as Boccaccio's tale.

The management of the action in these *Miracle-plays* is worthy of notice, except in the denouement, where the intervention of the Virgin is often clumsily managed, even to the point of seeming superadded and intended to offset the boldness of the subject. The plot, which is complex from the beginning, moves swiftly, aided by the multiple scenery. There are no long drawn out scenes, the dialogues are succinct, the principal facts well chosen, the secondary facts hurried through *à la française*, and there is an interesting record of bourgeois and popular manners, mingled, not too incongruously, with those of the kings and the clergy. Such are the qualities which make of these *miracles* the ancestral genre of the tragi-comedies of the seventeenth and the melodramas of the nineteenth centuries. "In the hands of

poets possessing even a little skill", says Gaston Paris, "the miracle-play could have been developed into true modern drama, by eliminating little by little the supernatural intervention at the end. But this was not done, owing to the lack of talent and especially personal initiative in the authors of the miracle-plays, and modern drama had its source in an imitation of antiquity" (1).

(1) G. PARIS, *Littérature au moyen âge*, § 168.



THE MIRACLE OF THEOPHILUS

From a miniature of the XIII century, taken from Psautier d'Ingeburge, wife of Philip-Auguste.



## II. — THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY : THE MYSTERIES.

**Definition.** — The word *mystère* does not designate, notwithstanding its orthography, a piece relating to the mysteries of religion. The word should be written *mistère*, and is derived from the Latin *ministerium* in the sense of *function*, *exercise*, and so, *representation* (cf. *drame*, taken from a Greek word which signifies action, and the Spanish word *auto*, act, representation) (1).

The earliest Mysteries seem to have been *pantomimes*, or rather *tableaux vivants* organised at certain festivals—the entry of kings, or reception of ambassadors (2). But, from the first years of the fifteenth century, the term was applied more especially, if not exclusively, to pieces drawn from the Old and the New Testament, from the legends of saints, and exceptionally, from history.

The Mystery could not have given rise in any way whatever to tragedy or serious drama as we conceive it nowadays, either by its construction or mode of action, or, still more, by its subject. In the first place, it is of an improbable length, consisting of 30.000, 40.000, 60.000 verses; its presentation required several *days*, usually on Sunday afternoons, and a week passed between two parts of a performance. The characters number 100, 200, 500, with innumerable figurants: in some cases, it seems as if half the town was engaged in amusing the other half. There is no unity except in the subject, the development of which is imposed by tradition; the scenes *follow each other* and are *set side by side*. Doubtless, it would not be true to say that the Passion does not possess *dramatic* quality; it is perhaps the finest and most strongly knit of all dramas: but it is much less dramatic in the Mysteries than in the Gospel. The authors of the Mysteries seem, in general, to have possessed the dramatic sense in a much less degree than those of the Miracle-plays. To this *diffusion*, this *dispersion*, this lack of *composition*, the Mysteries join some singular *incongruities*, not only to a reader with classical taste, but every reader or spectator who is not purely mediæval. The action, so sublime in itself, is constantly interrupted by grotesque episodes, not, as in Shakespeare or Calderon, to furnish contrast with the grandeur or horror of the tragic scenes, but merely to amuse the crowd; and to an enlightened faith, this seems profane and sacrilegious. It was moreover this strange mixture of motives which alarmed, in the middle of the sixteenth century, such consciences as were alive to the necessity of disarming the criticism of protestants; and this led, in 1548, to the brusque and decisive prohibition of the Mysteries. Finally, most of the Mysteries are written with deplorable facility; the versification is flowing, sometimes learned,

(1) See the texts cited by PETIT DE JULLEVILLE, *Mystères*, I, p. 188. However, this etymology is still questioned, so we preserve the orthography *Mystères* as traditional.

(2) *Id.*, I, p. 96.



but the dialogue degenerates into diffuse chatter, and the style rarely characterizes the personages.

However, we should not forget that no dramatic representations of any other kind or time ever had so much success as the Mysteries. If the religious convictions of the crowd partially explain its curiosity and enthusiasm, it cannot be denied that the Mysteries offered a *spectacle* of a kind which excited in the highest degree the most diverse sentiments. The authors, incapable of any power regarding unity, possessed the skill to vary the scenes according to the taste of their time. Majestic allegory, evangelical simplicity, touching or diabolical marvellous, episodes of a picturesque or horrible realism, alternate, not without incoherence, but in such a manner as to hold continually the attention of the crowd. The Mysteries are interminable but they are not monotonous; they sin rather by an excess of variety. Indeed, all those who have read attentively the *Passion* of Gréban and that of Jean Michel, are aware that, along with *inventions* worthy of the great dramatists (and concerning which we may only regret that the authors do not seem to have realized the value), are found certain parts, couplets or dialogues, which are truly successful achievements; we shall point them out in the analyses.



THE SCENE OF A "MIRACLE BY PERSONNAGES"

The miracle of Saint Jean le Paul, hermit, who forced by the Devil killed King's daughter, whom Notre-Dame having compassion on his penitence, brought to life again.

*From a miniature of the xiv century.*

**The Brotherhoods.** — There were no professional actors in the Middle Ages. There were *jugglers* who, in some cases, can be compared to actors or to strolling mountebanks, who carried here and there a repertory of tricks, monologues, jests; but on every occasion of a real representation requiring scenery and several actors, it was always the *confréries* who mounted and played the piece. We have already mentioned the *puīs* by whom the *Miracle-plays* were given; the members of these societies, at once religious and literary, shared the parts. But

a *Miracle-play* usually comprised five or six characters, while for the *Mystery* a much larger *troupe* was needed. An appeal had to be made to good will as well as to vanity. The clergy, the bourgeoisie, the colleges, the guilds, even the poor people, supplied the actors and the figurants. These associations which were at first transitory were permanently organized in Paris and in the provinces. Each town had its *confrérie*, with its own laws and regulations, its civil statutes, its endowments, its revenues.

The most celebrated of them all, and the only one which has a right to a place in the history of mediæval drama, is the *Confrérie de la Passion*, organized in Paris at the end of the fourteenth century, and which received letters patent from Charles VI in 1402. This *confrérie* had the sole right to present the *Mysteries* in the metropolis. They were at first established in the hospital of the Trinity, near the Saint-Denis gate, later in 1539 at the hôtel de Flandre in the rue Coq-Héron, and finally, in 1548, they removed to the hôtel de Bourgogne, rue Mauconseil, at the very moment when Parliament forbade the representation of sacred *Mysteries*. The *confrères*, nevertheless, settled in their new hall, and played profane pieces. At the end of the sixteenth century they let their theatre to a company of provincial professional actors, reserving to themselves certain privileges and a rental. The *Confrérie de la Passion* remained in existence as a company until 1676, at which date Louis XIV suppressed it and made over its property to the *Hôpital Général*.

These amateur actors had no less zeal and vanity than those of the professional class. Sometimes one of them achieved a reputation in his own town which extended considerably further; and the *confréries* occasionally borrowed the services of some celebrated actor, whom the public knew and applauded as it does to-day. Some roles were extraordinarily long and often dangerous to the player. Examples are mentioned of a priest representing Christ, who fainted during the scene of the Crucifixion (Metz 1437), and of a Judas who, after being hanged, had to be "hastily taken down and carried elsewhere to be rubbed with vinegar" (1).

Women very rarely took part in the *Mysteries*, and when they did, they were not given speaking parts; usually the feminine roles were played by young men.

**The Representations.** — Numerous documents attest that the *Mysteries* were given generally on their *liturgical* dates: the feast of a saint, Holy Week, etc. They were also given to obtain protection from Heaven in case of a scourge, or in gratitude for some accorded grace (2).

The clergy always encouraged the *Mysteries*; and the municipalities, especially, encouraged and allowed subsidies to these *jeux* which furnished both distraction and profit to their towns. Sometimes a prince or some rich individual

(1) PETIT DE JULLEVILLE, *Mystères*, I, p. 375.

(2) *Id.*, *ibid.*, I., p. 240.

paid the always large expenses for the theatre and costumes. The spectators paid a moderate sum for their places (12 deniers and 6 deniers at the *Passion* at Valenciennes in 1547); and after all expenses were deducted, the profits were divided between the managers and the actors.

Several weeks before the representation, the *confrères* of the town, or the temporary association organised for the occasion, caused a *cry*, or solemn proclamation to be made, announcing the forthcoming play, in order to incite gifts of money or costumes, and arouse the zeal of the voluntary actors. A cortège, preceded by buglers, and consisting of heralds on horseback, managers of the Mystery and leading citizens, went through the city, stopping at the cross streets where the town crier read the proclamation (1).



THE SCENE OF A "MIRACLE BY PERSONNAGES"

The miracle of the bishop whom the archdeacon kills so that he may be bishop after his death.

From a miniature of the XIV century.

**The Scenery and Accessories.** — The theatre in which the *confrères de la Passion* presented the Mysteries (and we have much testimony to prove that provincial theatres were the same) (2), did not resemble our modern theatres, as we have already remarked in connection with the Miracle-plays. It was for a long time thought that the stage consisted of several superimposed stories, the topmost being Heaven, the lowest, hell, and the intermediate stories representing the different earthly scenes. But Paulin Paris, in a study published in 1853 (3), has definitely established the setting of the Mysteries.

The theatre consisted of a flat space (*solier*), similar to our modern stage, but extremely large, and on this floor, at the back, were small independent cons-

(1) Read in PETIT DE JULLEVILLE, *Mystères*, I, 365, the *cry* of the *Actes des Apôtres*, 1540.

(2) Cf. *Id.*, t. I, pp. 391 et seq.

(3) Paris, Dupont, in-8.

tructions known as mansions (*maisons*), so made that the actors could pass freely from one to the other, and these represented different scenes, the characters grouping themselves around one or the other, according to the progress of the drama. It is true, however, that Paradise was placed above the mansions, often at one side on a sort of platform, and that hell was, so to speak, underground; and through a grating which closed an air-hole, the damned could be seen in the midst of the flames. The devils leaped out on the stage through a trap-door simulating a dragon's mouth.

The mansions were many in number. A miniature at the beginning of the *Passion of Valenciennes* (1547), shows the following scenes, from left to right (looking from the auditorium): Paradise, a room, Nazareth, the Temple, Jerusalem, a palace, the house of the Bishops, the Golden Door, the sea, limbo and hell. A door in the side of a wall serves to indicate Nazareth or Jerusalem; a square basin, filled with water, on which floats a small boat, represents the sea—(Lake of Tiberius), etc. In a Mystery played at Rouen in 1474, there were twenty-five mansions; in some plays there were as many as fifty.

Such scenery is doubtless very conventional; but in the theatre every accepted convention is legitimate. Though the juxtaposition of so many different places lacks probability, yet the action gains in rapidity and *coincidence*. As there were no interruptions for change of scene, the illusion, once created, was easier to sustain. Furthermore, the poets were compelled to make use of a vast and complicated stage, because in these religious dramas the whole of humanity, Heaven and hell are involved in the development and denouement, and the mysterious relations between God and man, between the sacrifice on Golgotha and the destiny of the world, must never be lost sight of. This theatre was, therefore, though almost infantile in its nature, an exact adaptation of the framework to the subject.

In the architecture of these mansions no effort was made to obtain either exactitude or local colour, and the same was true of the costumes, which were in the fashion of the time, though richer and more luxurious. Only the devils wore grotesque and horrible disguises. Christ and the Virgin alone wore long white tunics and blue cloaks; having to be separated, by these robes of mystical simplicity, from the picturesque and noisy crowd in modern clothing. In the same manner they are distinguished from the splendid convivial Venetians in Paul Veronese's "Marriage at Cana".

The actors remained all the time on the stage. Their part finished, or interrupted, they grouped themselves at the sides, instead of disappearing in the wings. It would have been easy, in the absence of wings, for them to have concealed themselves behind the mansions. They were obliged to stay in sight of the spectators because, on such an immense stage, their absence would have left too marked a void in the places where action was momentarily suspended.

Finally, it is certain that the Mysteries presented mechanical tricks, appar-



itions, ascensions, fires, battles, etc., all very naïvely executed, but sufficiently well done to satisfy spectators in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (1).

**The Principal Mysteries.** — It is customary to divide the Mysteries into several cycles: 1, *Cycle of the Old Testament*; 2, *Cycle of the New Testament*; 3, *Cycle of the Saints*; 4, *Profane Mysteries*.

1. *Cycle of the Old Testament.* — Under the title *Old Testament* we possess a very long



A MIRACLE OF NOTRE-DAME

"Concerning the woman, who, in the place of the child she had lost, kidnapped in the likeness of Notre-Dame, he whom Notre-Dame held."

*From a painting in a manuscript of the xv century.*

composition, printed about the year 1500, and comprising: first, a *Bible encyclopedia*, from the Creation to Solomon (2), then six distinct *Mysteries*: *Job*, *Tobias*, *Susannah* and *Daniel*, *Judith*, *Esther* (3), *Octavianus* and the *Sybils*—making altogether 49,200 verses. It is probable that the first part, which alone contains 36,500 verses, is a combination of *Mysteries* originally separated. We also have a *Mystère de la Patience de Job* (1540), consisting of 5,500 verses and having 49 characters.

2. *Cycle of the New Testament.* — This includes those *Mysteries* which present the whole or part of the history of Jesus Christ and the Apostles. Of these, seven comprise the *Nativity*, the *Passion* and the *Resurrection*. The oldest is the Mss. of *Sainte-Geneviève*, in 9,800 verses. The most famous is that of **Arnould Gréban**, represented in 1452, during four days, and comprising 34,574 verses and nearly 400 characters. Of this we shall give a brief analysis, following the edition by G. Paris and Raynaud.

(1) Concerning this, cf. PETIT DE JULLEVILLE, *Mystères*, I, p. 394.

(2) Read, in L. SUDRE'S *Chrestomathie*, *Les Adieux d'Eve mourante*, p. 71.

(3) *Id.*, p. 74, *Esther et Assuérus*.

**Analysis de la Passion of Arnould Gréban.** — The first 1,500 verses include : a prologue, which is a sort of *sermon*, and the story of Creation down to the murder of Abel and the death of Adam. Then, Adam, in limbo, invokes the promised Redeemer, while in hell the devils sing the fall of the human race : the scene is truly grandiose (1). In Heaven, before God, Mercy and Peace conduct their case against Justice and Truth : the Redemption is decided, and this arouses joy in limbo among the just, while provoking the fury of the devils. Then follow : the Annunciation, the birth of the Messiah, the adoration of the Shepherds (a charming pastoral scene) (2), the wise men, the massacre of the Innocents, the flight to Egypt, and Jesus in the midst of the doctors.

During the second day are presented all the events which take place between the preaching of Saint John the Baptist (3) and the Passion, properly speaking. Among the finer scenes, which display a certain dramatic sense, may be noted : the entry of Christ into Jerusalem, where the impressions among the crowd of old men, women and children, are given with accuracy and variety—to the popular rejoicing are contrasted the lamentations and predictions of Jesus ; the Last Supper, where Satan appears, only seen by Jesus and Judas ; the recital of Lazarus to his sisters (4), and above all the dialogue between Jesus and his Mother (5).

The third day the Passion is presented. We may note the scene in the Garden of Olives, where the agony of Christ is expressed in fine verse ; Peter's denial, surrounded by popular characters, servants, soldiers, executioners, with picturesque names, and speaking realistically ; the scourging, where the verse has a curious rhythm ; the despair and suicide of Judas, to whom Despair appears ; the lament of Our Lady at the foot of the cross (6) ; the sharing of Christ's raiment by the soldiers.

The fourth day is consecrated to the Resurrection, the Ascension and the descent of the Holy Ghost. Then, to balance the prologue, there is a scene in limbo and in hell ; the demons lament, and the souls of the just are led away by the Spirit of Jesus. At the end, the leading actor addresses a farewell to the spectators.

Among the other *Passions*, should be noted that of **Jean Michel** (1486), in 65,000 verses. Despite its length, this mystery does not cover so wide a field as Gréban's. It begins (after a sermon in 1,000 verses), with the preaching of John the Baptist, and comprises the history of Jesus until the Entombment. But each episode is given in detail ; the torture and *demonic scenes* are further developed ; certain parts in Jean Michel's work, such as that of Pilate, show a genuine originality (7) ; finally, it seems that this Passion abounded in *mechanical* devices. — To sum up, Jean Michel took the second and third days of Gréban's work, exploited, as a skilful dramatist, all the situations, added to them everything that could pique the curiosity of the spectators, and often expressed the sentiments with much success : for example, the dialogue between Jesus and his Mother, both in style and matter, is replete with truth and pathos (8).

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 77.

(2) Cited by PETIT DE JULLEVILLE, *Mystères*, II, p. 401.

(3) Read in G. PARIS, *Chrestomathie*, the dialogue between John and Herod, p. 346.

(4) Cited by PETIT DE JULLEVILLE, *Mystères*, II, p. 405.

(5) Cited by PETIT DE JULLEVILLE, *Mystères*, I, p. 213. On the subject of this passage, which was later to be taken and successfully developed by Jean Michel, G. Paris writes : " The mysterious complexity of this heart of the Virgin-mother, which, in the same being, loves her son and venerates her God, of this soul which, though full of the prescience of future glory, is no less agonized by present grief, this complexity which it is impossible to grasp truly represent, Arnould Gréban had the power to imagine, and at times to indicate with some success. Mary is the purest and at the same time most lifelike character in his work. " (*Passion of GRÉBAN*, Introduction, p. 17.)

(6) Read this piece in CLÉDAT's *Chrestomathie*, p. 430.

(7) Read, in PETIT DE JULLEVILLE's *Mystères*, I, p. 225, Pilate's hesitations and his reproach to the Jews.

(8) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 80.

Of the works of Jean Michel, we possess also a *Resurrection*, which was presented at Angers, like the foregoing *Passion*, in three days, and had 20,000 verses and 105 characters.

Arnould Gréban and his brother Simon wrote in collaboration the *Actes des Apôtres*, 60,000 verses, 494 characters, which was printed in 1538. It is the history of the preaching and martyrdom of the Apostles, with a number of familiar and of demoniac scenes.

3. *Cycle of the Saints*. — Petit de Julleville analyses thirty-five *Mystères* consecrated to



A MIRACLE OF NOTRE-DAME

Concerning the child named Gaubert that the Devil made fall from the window, and whom Notre-Dame received.

*From a painting in a manuscript of the xv century.*

the saints, of which the most remarkable are : *Saint André, Sainte Barbe, Saint Denis, Saint Louis, Saint Nicolas*, etc. These mysteries are, like Miracle-plays, full of realistic and-dramatic situations ; but the execution is weak.

**Profane Mysteries.** — If the fifteenth or sixteenth century had produced in France a Shakespeare, or even a Marlowe, we should have possessed from that



period dramas which would have perfectly prepared the way for such historical plays as *Henri IV*, *Henri V*, or *Richard III*. The French stage was as large, as free, as favourable to the development of the most varied poems as that of the Globe Theatre in London. The efforts of French dramatic authors were not without merit; had they eventually produced masterpieces, their earlier plays would have been studied with the most sympathetic curiosity. But, such as they are, *Le Mystère de Troie*, by Jacques Millet (1463), *Le Mystère du Siège d'Orléans* (1439), of which the author is unknown, and the *Mystère de saint Louis*, by Pierre Gringoire (1514), are disappointing to read. The first is as romantic as the work of Benoît de Sainte-More; the second, of scrupulous historical exactitude, but written in a very flat style, and it required such complicated scenery that it was doubtless never given; the third, though better written, and sufficiently faithful to historical verity, is monotonous and tiresome to the last degree.

**The End of the Mysteries.** — We have already said that a decree of Parliament at Paris, on the 17 of November, 1548, forbade the representation of Mysteries in the capital. The reasons for this interdiction are easy to imagine. Protestants severely blamed the Catholic Clergy for tolerating this admixture of the sacred with the profane; the spectators had already begun to indulge in joking which was more sacrilegious than naïve; professional actors were becoming more numerous and were replacing the *confrères*; and finally, the taste of educated people began to be shocked by the gross defects of an art which was very unequal, and usually very inferior to the dignity of its subject.

It would be a mistake to suppose, however, that the Mysteries disappeared simultaneously from all the towns of France. Representations are noted in 1560, 1573, 1580, etc. In 1624 there was still played at Draguignan a *Histoire des Macabées*; and in the country, during certain feasts, the custom of presenting Mysteries, either spoken or in pantomime, was continued during the eighteenth century.

But, however this may be, after the middle of the sixteenth century this genre fell into desuetude and disappeared. From other ideas, another society and another taste was born a new genre, tragedy, which was imitated from antiquity.

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ANGELS CARRYING THE COLLAR OF THE ORDER OF SAINT-MICHAEL  
From a miniature in a manuscript of the beginning of the xv century.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### COMEDY IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

#### SUMMARY

**MEDIAEVAL COMEDY** is related, at least through its principal genre, the *farce*, to classical comedy.

1. **FROM THE THIRTEENTH TO THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.** — The *jongleurs* have a repertory of *monologues*, of *dits*, of *disputes*, which already exhibit dramatic form. — **ADAM DE LA HALLE** causes to be played at Arras, in 1262, the *Jeu de la Feuillée*, a satirical and fantastical comedy; and at Naples, about 1285, *Robin et Marion*, a pastoral play accompanied with music. — We have no comedy of the fourteenth century.

2. **FIFTEENTH CENTURY.** — The *Sociétés joyeuses* are founded, analogous to the *confréries*: *Les Clercs de la Basoche*, *Les Enfants-sans-Souci*.

3. **FARCES.** — The best known is *Pathelin* (1470), the author of which is unknown. Its plot is clever, its character types alive, its morality is all empirical. To this may be added *Le Pâté et la Tarte*, and *Le Cuvier*, the wittiest of the farces directed against woman.

4. **THE MORALITY** made use of allegorical characters to teach a lesson to the spectators. — Among the religious *moralities* may be mentioned *Bien-Avisé et Mal-Avisé*; among the didactic, *La Condamnation de Banquet*.

5. **THE SOTIE** was a political play, dealing with passing events and represented by the *Sots* or the *Enfants-sans-Souci*. — Of these the most celebrated is the *Jeu du Prince des Sots*, by Gringoire (1512), which is full of allusions to the quarrels between Louis XII and Pope Julius II.

6. Lastly, there were **monologues**, satirizing the different social classes, and **sermons joyeux**, which had come down from the ancient *Fête des Fous*.



DECORATED LETTER  
from a manuscript of the  
XV century.

HOUGH the Mysteries and Miracle-plays belong exclusively to the Middle Ages, and did not give rise to serious classic French drama, yet it cannot be denied that the history of French comedy is one of continuous development. Between the comic pieces given from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century and those of the seventeenth and eighteenth, there are without doubt striking differences, but only such as the taste of each epoch dictated to the poet. Without comparing the author of *Pathelin* to the author of *Tartuffe*, nor Adam de la Halle to Beaumarchais, this evolution is unquestionable (1).

## I. — FIRST PERIOD: FROM THE THIRTEENTH TO THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

**Origin.** — The jugglers not only carried about from castle to castle or from town to town the *chansons de geste* and romances, they had a whole repertory of *dits*, *monologues* and *disputes* or *débats*. "A vein, which was doubtless never cut, although it is rarely to be seen amidst the obscurity of vanished centuries, connected the Roman mimes with the buffoons of the fifteenth century (2)." We possess no dramatic text before the thirteenth century, and the fourteenth shows a complete gap difficult to explain. But it is sure that the greater part of the subjects represented in the fifteenth century—an epoch of large development for all the comic genres—are rehandlings of older pieces. Of all MSS. those of dramatic works were most destined to go astray, as only the latest ver-

(1) Concerning this, see PETIT DE JULLEVILLE, *La Comédie et les Mœurs au moyen âge*, introduction and conclusion.

(2) GASTON PARIS, *Littérature au moyen âge*, § 131.

sion of the play was ever kept. It was only after printing had, as it were, *fixed* a dated text, that a definitive form of the play was circulated among the public. The greater part of the printed texts do not bear the names of the authors; and the author of *Pathelin* is not known. Perhaps no poet thought he had the right to sign a work which he only rewrote: one does not sign a picture which one only repairs.

**ADAM DE LA HALLE** (1230-1288). — By chance, however, we begin with



THE HALL OF THE PALACE

From a printing of the xvi century, engraved by Jacques Androuet du Cerceau [1515 (?) - 1584 (?)].

works both dated and signed, and whose author seems to have had the most marked literary personality.

Adam de la Halle, like Jean Bodel, came from Arras. Destined at first for the Church, he fell in love with a young girl and married her. Later he resolved to go to Paris, to uproot himself from his provincial idleness. Before departing, in 1262, he had his first play performed, *Le Jeu de la Feuillée*, and addressed to the inhabitants of Arras a *congé*. He does not appear to have stayed away for a long while, as we find him in exile at Douai in 1265, and this exile seems to have been the consequence of the part he took in civic troubles by which Arras was then torn. He followed Robert d'Artois to Naples in 1283, when the

jatter was sent to the aid of Charles d'Anjou. There he had a kind of official position as organizer of the dramatic and musical diversions of the court of Naples, and he presented his pasturale, *Robin et Marion*. The date of his death is not known; we only know, from an allusion made by his nephew, Jean Mados, that Adam de la Halle was no longer alive in 1288.

**Le Jeu de la Feuillée**, or *Jeu Adam*, was probably not played in public, but must have been given by a *puy*, which would explain the excessive boldness of certain satirical speeches in the play.—The scene is laid under a green arbour, a *feuillée*, set up to celebrate the return of spring. There are eighteen characters: the poet, maître Adam;—his father, maître Henri;—several citizens of Arras, whose names are probably authentic;—a doctor;—an itinerant monk, exhibitor of relics;—a lady;—a maniac and his father;—a tavern-keeper;—the *commun* (the people, whom we shall find again under this name in the *soties*);—three fairies, *Morgue*, *Magloire* and *Arseille*;—Fortune, and the messenger *Croquesos*.—Adam announces to his father and the citizens, that he wishes to go to Paris to study; that he will leave his wife, Marie, whom he does not love any more. But he needs money, and asks it of his father; his father protests that he has none, and says that he is very ill. “C'est d'un mal que je connais bien, déclare le médecin; on le nomme avarice.” And he mentions the names of various inhabitants of Arras suffering from the same malady. The monk appears, showing the relics of St. Acaire, whose touch cures madness; but nobody wishes to confess himself mad, except the maniac who is led by his father, and who does not get cured. He chatters ramblingly on current affairs, and his bold talk is full of comment upon actual events which must have seemed witty and amusing to his contemporaries.—Night comes, a spring night (like that of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*); the fairies arrive, preceded by the mysterious hunter, Hellequin, whose steps die away in the distance. Then comes Fortune, who shows, on her ever-turning wheel, sundry personages of the time. After the passage of this fairy and allegorical cortège, the citizens sitting under the arbour drink and play at dice; they make the monk believe that he has lost, and must pay the reckoning of the others; but the monk has no money, and leaves the relics of St. Acaire in pawn. As may be seen, this piece is a singular admixture of satirical comedy with lively characters—and fairy enchantment. We cannot tell whether this was a work unique of its kind in the thirteenth century, or whether Adam had precursors and imitators (1).

Very different is the play **Jeu de Robin et Marion**, which is truly called the first French comic opera. It is entirely in verse; but there were sung as well as spoken scenes, the music of which, composed by Adam himself, has been recovered.—The theme of *Robin et Marion* contains nothing original; Adam borrowed it from the lyric poetry of his time, and it is only a dramatized *pastourelle*, but done with taste.—The shepherdess, *Marion*, while guarding her sheep, sings her love for *Robin*. A knight arrives, with his falcon on his wrist; he invites the shepherdess to follow him to his castle; she replies that he is wasting his time, for she will never love any one but *Robin*. The knight goes away and *Robin* appears; they talk and eat and dance. But the shepherd being gone to seek his friends, the knight returns, and this time carries off *Marion* on his charger, in sight of *Robin* and his companions, who dare not attack him. But *Marion* defends herself so well that the knight lets her escape, and this happy denouement is celebrated with new games and dances.

The plot is ordinary; but the details are charming and dainty, and accurately *rustic*; the characters are well projected and sustained. And here we may again ask whether a work so well poised, so true, does not presuppose previous efforts and an extensive

(1) Read in G. PARIS, *Chrestomathie*, p. 322, a scene from the *Jeu de la Feuillée*.



dramatic literature already rich in traditions (1). In addition we have only to note a farce played at Tournai in 1277, *le Garçon et l'Aveugle*.

**The fourteenth Century.** — It is true, however, that we possess no comic text whatever of the fourteenth century, while of serious drama we have the collection of the *Miracles de Notre-Dame*.

We shall mention only, with Petit de Julleville, two short works by Eustache Deschamps : 1, the *dit* of the four departments of the king's hôtel, *panneterie*, *échansonnerie*, *cuisine* and *saucerie*. According to the indications given by the poet himself, this *dit* was to be played by actors ; 2, the dialogue between *maître Trubert* and *Antroignart*, a crafty advocate and a litigant without conscience ; but it is possible that this dialogue was not intended to be played.

## II. — THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY : THE SOCIÉTÉS JOYEUSES.

Like the Mysteries and the Miracle-plays, mediæval comedies were not played by professional actors. The best-known joyous Brotherhoods at Paris were those of the *Clercs de la Basoche* and the *Enfants-sans-Souci*.

**The Clercs de la Basoche.** — *Basoche*, from the Latin *basilica*, designated the *Palais de Justice*, and the *Basoche du Parlement* was composed of attorneys' and advocates' clerks, clerks of registrars and parliamentary counsellors. The *Basoche du Châtelet* comprised the clerks of notaries, attorneys and registrars of the Châtelet. The *Grande Basoche* (that of *Parlement*) seems to have existed from the first years of the fourteenth century, and lasted until the end of the sixteenth. It enjoyed certain privileges : the election of a *roi*, the right to coin money, permission to play on the marble table at the *Palais*, etc. It celebrated feasts in the spring of each year, for the planting of the maypole, and in July. It is believed that the *clercs* more especially played *farces* and *pantomimes*.

**The Enfants-sans-Souci**, or the *sots*, are, according to Petit de Julleville, " the ancient celebrants of the *Fête des Fous*, turned out of the Church by indignant councils, and reassembled on the public square, or the neighbouring cross-streets, to continue the fête." They were dressed, like court fools, half in yellow, half in green ; they wore hats trimmed with little bells and surmounted by asses' ears ; they held in their hands a bawble. The *sots* were probably poor students, joyous Bohemians ; but sometimes they seem to have been almost confounded with the *Basochiens*. At the head of this society was the *Prince des sots* ; the second dignitary was *Mère-Sotte*, a title which the poet Gringoire bore. The *Enfants-sans-Souci* played *soties*, as well as *farces* and *moralités* until the end of the sixteenth century.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 44.

**Other Societies.** — A great many other joyous societies could be named, in Paris as well as in the provinces: at Paris, *l'Empire de Galilée*; at Dijon, *la Mère folle*; at Lyons, *Les Suppôts du Seigneur de la Coquille*, a society composed of typographers; at Rouen, *Les Connards*, etc. In every town of any importance, the *cleres*, artisans, students, formed associations for representing at certain feasts amusing and satirical plays (1).

### III. — FARCES.

**Definition of the Genre.** — The *farce*, from the Latin *farsa* (*farcire*, to fill), is, in culinary language, the hashed meat placed inside a fowl, a *pâté*, etc. Primitively, the word *farce* meant certain interpolations mingled with the liturgical text of the Epistles, the Gospels, etc. Very serious *épîtres farcies* were recited at some feasts; at the *Fête des fous* these were burlesqued (2), and then the *farce* was in French. But must we conclude from this that the first dramatic *farces* owed their name to the admixture of diverse dialects? We should rather believe that, at the period when short comic interludes were introduced into the *mystères*, these comic parts were regarded as the *farce* which was added to the more substantial dish, and served as an agreeable condiment. In this way, these short comedies would have preserved their name of *farce* even when they were presented alone. Nevertheless, whatever may be the etymology of the word, the *farce* is the true comedy of manners, with a plot; developed further, it would sometimes be a study of character. If the *farce* often borrowed its *scenario* from some familiar short story, and though, like the *fabliau*, it drew material from the treasury of popular tales, it rejuvenated these traditional subjects with its direct observation of contemporary types and manners. Its style is always lively, very French, and dramatic in the true sense of the word. It should be noted that the *farce*, like the *moralité*, sometimes made use of allegorical characters.

We have preserved one hundred and fifty *farces*, the text of which has been frequently garbled; they are almost always rejuvenated versions of some piece which had already passed through several evolutions. The most renowned, of very different genres, are *Pathelin*, *Le Pâté et la Tarte* and *Le Cuvier*.

**Analysis of "Pathelin."** — Maître Pathelin is an *avocat sous l'orme*, that is to say, a briefless barrister. His wife Guillemette complains of not having a farthing to her name, and only threadbare gowns. Pathelin promises to bring back from the fair some cloth for them both. He quits his house, which is at the left of the stage (this house is open,

(1) Concerning all the *Confréries Joyeuses*, see PETIT DE JULLEVILLE, *Les Comédiens en France au moyen âge*. Paris, 1885.

(2) The *Fête des Fous*, or of the *Innocents*, is said to have been celebrated on St. Etienne's and St. Innocent's days. The Church ritual was parodied, even in the Church itself. An ass was brought into the choir. Grotesque songs replaced the liturgical chants. It was suppressed in 1445 by an edict of Charles VII.

and the bed in his room is visible', and goes to the right where the shop of Guillaume the draper is to be seen: pieces of cloth are exposed outside.

The draper, sitting before his door, watches for customers. Pathelin approaches him, salutes him and praises his dead father; and while talking lays his hand as if by accident on a piece of the cloth. He pretends to be delighted with its fine quality, asks the price, pretends to bargain, and takes six ells of the stuff (1). Pathelin, having still one *parisis* (about a French franc) in his pocket, gives it as earnest money, and the sale is concluded. He then asks Guillaume to come to his house to receive his money in golden *écus*, and to eat some of the goose his wife Guillemette is roasting. The draper accepts: he will carry the cloth; but Pathelin puts the package briskly under his own garment, protesting with great politeness that he will save the merchant that trouble. The lawyer being gone, the merchant congratulates himself on having obtained 24 *sous* for each ell (about 24 francs in French money) for a cloth which was only worth 20. Thus, for the moment, it is he who believes himself to have cheated his customer. Pathelin returns home.

At sight of this fine cloth Guillemette cries out and is troubled: how shall they ever pay for it? Her husband reassures her, and tells her what they must do: when Guillaume comes to eat the goose and get his money, they will make him believe that the lawyer has been ill for six weeks, and could not possibly have bought cloth of him or invited him to sup; and Pathelin, lying in bed, will pretend to be delirious. We may imagine the astonishment of Guillaume, who arrives presently. The poor man, at first incredulous, is obliged to give in when he sees Pathelin tossing on his bed, a prey to feverish agitation, and jabbering in all sorts of language. Guillaume goes away, wondering what illusion has so victimized him.

Meanwhile, a naïve looking shepherd comes to see Pathelin; his name is Agnelet and he is Guillaume's shepherd. His master has just caused his arrest, accusing him of having clubbed to death several of his sheep in order to eat them and sell their wool. Now Agnelet has need of a lawyer, and comes to consult Pathelin. The latter, who is full of tricks, advises the shepherd to pretend to be an idiot, and to answer every question addressed to him by the judge, by Guillaume or himself, by the word *baa*... The lawyer will plead irresponsibility, and the poor man will be acquitted. Then begins the judgment scene in the middle of the stage which represents the public square (2). Guillaume is at one side, Agnelet at the other, and behind Agnelet is Pathelin. The draper makes his accusation, when all at once he recognizes the lawyer. His ideas become confused, and he mixes up the stolen cloth with the killed sheep. The judge believes him mad, brings him back to the subject of the sheep, and ends by discharging the shepherd, who,

## Maître

Pierre pathelin Dystoie.



*Dela Bibliothèque de  
Le Marquis de la Borra*

### PATHELIN AND GUILLAUME

From the frontispiece engraved on wood edition of the *Farce de Pathelin*.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 48.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 84.

true to his promise, has only answered baa to every question. Pathelin triumphs this time, but he is going to find his master. Left alone with Agnelet he asks for his fee, Agnelet continues to bleat in reply, and the furious Pathelin cannot get a word out of him. With this final deception the piece ends.

**The Plot and the Characters in Pathelin.** — *Pathelin* is, first of all, what is



PATHELIN AND HIS WIFE GUILLEMETTE

From an engraving on wood taken from edition of the *Farce de Pathelin*.

called a *well-constructed* play. The exposition is clear; the incidents follow one another with natural logic; there are no unnecessary scenes; no tediousness; a denouement in which the situation of each character is in accordance with his behaviour. Here is already something of Beaumarchais or Scribe in the ease and rapidity of the action. Here is also an excellent psychology with reference to each character's *state of life*: the merchant, the lawyer, the shepherd, the judge, act and speak, in every least detail, like people who bear the deep imprint of their callings. The judgment scene, in which all four are in conflict, is a masterpiece of accuracy and variety. The *morality* of the piece is not at all artificial, but becomes evident as the events themselves unroll; it is altogether inwoven with the action, as in the greater part of Molière's comedies. It is a "ricochet of knavish tricks", as natural as it is diverting, as sad upon reflection as it is amusing to see. But it would be wronging *Pathelin* to seek *characters* in its scenes; it must suffice us to admire

its *types*, so well observed and rendered that they still seem to-day alive and human.

**The Style of Pathelin.** — The language of *Pathelin* is so purely French that even now it scarcely seems archaic. With the help of a few notes at the foot of the page, nothing is easier than to read this fifteenth century comedy. The style is rapid and direct as is essentially proper in drama. The dialogue is crisp, the retort incisive; there is no pretention, no *literature*; the language is colloquial rather than written; and French drama possesses nothing more



precise and natural before Molière. The short octosyllabic verses, are brisk and well rhymed, show no sense of effort, and pleasant overlappings, always in harmony with the action, give them suppleness.

**Who was the Author of "Pathelin?"** — The first masterpiece of French comedy is anonymous. The piece was written in 1470, and not one of the numerous editions which appeared as early as the end of the fifteenth century bears the name of the author. It has been attributed to Villon, to a certain Pierre Blanchet, who lived from 1439 to 1519, to Antoine de la Salle, author of the *Petit Jehan de Saintre*. None of these suppositions is based on any authentic proof. It remains true that *Pathelin* was the work of a genuine artist, and that its exceptional value was immediately recognized (1). In fact, though all the other comic material was constantly subjected to rehandling and renewing, *Pathelin* "crystallized" finally in its 1470 text. It was never rewritten; but sequels appeared, called *Le Nouveau Pathelin*, *Le Testament de Pathelin* (2). Its verses became proverbs. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, when all French mediæval literature was disdained or unknown, Brueys and Palaprat wrote *L'Avocat Pathelin*, a sufficiently faithful imitation, though spoiled by a love intrigue (1706). In 1872 a more exact adaptation, by Edouard Fournier, was presented at the Comédie-Française, under the title *La Vraie Farce de Pathelin*; and remains in the repertory of that theatre.



*Le Berger*  
*Le Bee,*

**PATHELIN AND AGNELET**

From an engraving on wood, taken from an incunabular edition of the *Farce de Pathelin*.

**Le Pâté et la Tarte.** — This is only a short, humorous piece, a *bluette*, but it has the easily recognized touch of all the French authors of vaudevilles and Spanish farces from the fifteenth century until now.—Two vagabonds, shivering at a street corner,

(1) Concerning this question, see PETIT DE JULLEVILLE, *La Comédie et les Mœurs en France au moyen âge*. Paris, 1886, p. 234.

(2) These two sequels may be read in the *Recueil de farces*, by the bibliophile Jacob. Paris. Garnier, 1876.

overhear a pastry-cook say to his wife : " I am going to dine with friends, and I shall send a messenger for the eel-pie. " After his departure, one of the vagabonds enters the shop, asks for the pie, carries it off, and goes away with his companion to eat it. During this providential repast, the pastry-cook returns ; his friends were not there, he will eat the pie with his wife. " The pie ", says she, " I gave it to your messenger. Whereupon she gets a beating.—But our two vagabonds, the pie finished, wish for a tart which the first one saw in the shop ; and this time the second vagabond plays the part of messenger. The pastry-cook makes as if to club him, but spares him on condition that his comrade comes to receive the blows. So the second vagabond returns to the first, to whom he says, " The woman will not give the tart except to the same one to whom she gave the pie. " The other vagabond runs to the pastry-shop, where he receives a sound drubbing. Praise is chiefly due to this little piece for the sureness of the dramatic sequence, which is developed in a highly probable and amusing manner.

**Le Cuvier.** — There is more observation and art in *Le Cuvier*, which is one of the numerous satirical farces directed against women. It shows also that French dramatic authors of the fifteenth century drew their material largely from the same sources as the authors of the *fabliaux*.—Jacquinot, a weak and over-indulgent husband, is persecuted by his wife and his mother-in-law. He asks them in order to avoid perpetual disputes, to write on paper (a *rollet* or little *roll*) a complete list of his obligatory duties. In a very well-constructed scene, we see Jacquinot seated at his table, writing at the dictation of the two women, who heap up his tasks, racking their brains to think of more, while Jacquinot, who has his own ideas, keeps on writing. The paper is signed, and Jacquinot, putting it into his pocket, aids his wife with the washing. A large washtub stands in the middle of the stage ; the wife falls into it, because of a wrong motion made by her husband, and cannot get out. She calls Jacquinot to her assistance. But he, very coolly, draws the *rollet* from his pocket and reads it, item by item. Interrupted at each line by the cries and supplications of his wife, he at length declares that this is not on his list of duties. The mother-in-law, incapable of getting her daughter out of the wash-tub alone, promises that they will tear up the list. The husband then consents to pull out his wife, and vows to himself to become master in his own home (1).

A true and entertaining portrayal of popular types is found in the following farces : *Le Chaudronnier*, *Le Sourd et l'Ivrogne*, *Le Marchand de pommes*. In some of them a joker, a *sot*, plays the principal part. Several famous farces satirize women, often stupidly and coarsely, but sometimes rather wittily, such as *Maître Mimin*, *La Cornette*, *Les Femmes qui veulent refondre leurs maris*, *La Pipée*, *Georges le Veau*, etc.

**Political Farces.** — Along with the farces devoted to the depiction of various social conditions and of the manners of the time, we find a few which take their subjects from current political events. But these we shall treat of with the *solies*, which were more especially devoted to this kind of satire.

#### IV. — THE MORALITY-PLAY.

**Definition.** — The Morality-play is didactic and allegorical. We have seen, by the success of *Le Roman de la Rose*, how much the personification of virtues,

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 82.

vices, opinions, etc., was liked in the Middle Ages. The object of the *Moralité* was to instruct rather than amuse.

Sixty Moralities have been preserved, and these may be subdivided into religious, didactic, satirical and pathetic Moralities. This genre persisted until about 1350.

**Le feu du prince des sots. Et  
mère sotte.** *de Valois*

**Religious Moralities.** — The chief religious Moralities are : *Bien-Avisé et Mal-Avisé*, *L'Homme juste et l'Homme mondain*, *L'Homme pécheur*, *Charité*, *Les Blasphémateurs*, *Les Enfants de maintenant*, etc. The first may be taken as a type.



**Le Jeu aux halles de paris le marby  
gras. L'an mil cinq cens et Vise.**

LE JEU DU PRINCE DES SOTS ET MÈRE SOTTE

"Foolishness, morality and farce composed by Pierre Gringoire, called mère Sotte".

Frontispiece, e. graved on wood, of a gothic edition

He contemplates the wheel of Fortune to which are attached four men named *Regnabo* (I shall reign), *Regno* (I reign), *Regnavi* (I have reigned), *Sum sine regno* (I am without a kingdom). *Bien-Avisé* comes to Good-End, who delivers his soul into the hands of angels.—During this time *Mal-Avisé* had followed Leisure, Rebellion, Folly, Despair, Poverty, etc., who conducted him to Bad-End; he is precipitated into hell where the spectators can see him supping with Satan.

We may connect, with the religious Moralities, *L'Aveugle et le Boiteux*, by André de la Vigne, which was given at Seurre in 1496 at the end of a *Mystère de Saint Martin*, by the same author. Saint Martin has just died, and they are about to carry his body in procession. The ceremony has, as usual, drawn a great number of beggars. A blind man and a lame man beg, with loud and plaintive voices, for public charity. They

converse familiarly with each other, and the lame man says to the blind man that he would like to go away, because if by chance the body of the saint should pass there, they might, both of them, be cured by a miracle, and in that event how could they gain their living? So the blind man, guided by the lame man's voice, comes near to him, and taking him on his back they prepare to escape. But the cortège arrives, and they are both cured! The lame man laments; but the blind man cannot help but rejoice enthusiastically in the light which he now sees for the first time (1).

**Didactic Moralities.** — The type of this genre is *La Condamnation de Banquet*, composed by Nicolas de la Chesnaye in 1507 (?). It is long, containing about 6,000 verses.

**Analysis of "La Condamnation de Banquet".** — The first character to appear is the *Docteur Prologueur*, who sets forth the subject and the moral of the piece.—A company of people, whose gaiety and carelessness is revealed by their names: Good Company, Gluttony, Sweet-Tooth, Leisurely, Your-Health, Let-me-pledge-you, Pleasant-Routine accept successively three invitations for the same day, from Dinner, Supper and Banquet. During the copious repast at Dinner's, appear at the windows the faces of the diseases which are already on the watch for the diners: Apoplexy, Paralysis, Epilepsy, Pleurisy, Jaundice, etc. After dinner, the company go to Supper's. This time, the diseases fling themselves upon the company at the end of the repast, shaking a few of them roughly; but, though they escape, despite this cruel lesson, they have nothing more urgent to do than to run to Banquet's. Here the action is interrupted by a sermon from *Docteur Prologueur*, who preaches three hundred verses on sobriety.

Banquet has delivered up the company to the Diseases; the latter leap upon the unfortunate beings who, with the exception of three, Good-Company, Leisurely and Pleasant-Routine, succumb to their blows. The survivors go to seek Dame Experience, and lodge a complaint against Banquet. The sergeants of Experience, who are called Assistance, Sobriety, *Clystère*, Pill, Bled, etc., arrest Banquet and Supper. The culprits are brought to judgment. On either side of Dame Experience sit Hippocrates, Galien, Avicenne and Averroës. Banquet is sentenced to be hanged, Supper to wear cuffs of lead, that his hand may be heavier when he passes around meat and drink; and he must always keep six leagues away from Dinner (an interval of six hours should separate the two repasts). Banquet is shriven, asks pardon for his crimes, and is hanged by Low-Diet (2).

**Satirical Moralities.** — Some Moralities are devoted to questions of contemporary politics. These we shall group with the *soeties* with which, in spite of their title, they blend.

**Pathetic Moralities.** — A few Moralities are genuine dramas, analogous in subject and method to the Miracle-plays of the fourteenth century. To speak accurately, these are not Moralities at all, since their characters are historical or legendary and not allegorical. Among these we may note the story of the woman condemned to starve to death in prison by the consuls Oracius and

(1) *L'Aveugle et le Boiteux* may be read in the *Recueil de farces*, by P.-L. JACOB, bibliophile. Paris, Garnier, p. 215.

(2) Text published by P.-L. JACOB, *Recueil de farces*, p. 273



Valérius; her daughter, who has a young baby, visits her and nourishes her with her own milk; the consuls are moved to pity, and pardon the imprisoned woman.—An emperor abdicates in favor of his nephew. The nephew commits a crime, and the emperor kills him with his own hand. As he refuses to repent of a murder which he regards as an act of justice, his chaplain refuses him communion. Then the Deity performs a miracle: the sacred Host moves of itself to the lips of the emperor.

It is well to note the presence of these historical and legendary pieces in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These dramas or melodramas (whether they are called *Miracle-plays* or *Moralities*) prove—and this cannot be too often repeated—that French drama could have been developed in the same way as English or Spanish drama. Subjects, methods, style, all were ready for an author of genius, but he did not appear.



## V. — LA SOTIE.

FAITH, CHARITY, HYPOCRISY, RICHES AND DEVOTION

From the frontispiece, engraved on wood, of a gothic edition.

**Definition.** — The *solie* or *sottie* was played by the *Sots* or *Enfants-sans-Souci*. The *Sots* founded their system of satire upon the hypothesis that society is entirely composed of madmen. Over their costumes they wore symbols of different functions and social conditions: the judge, the soldier, the monk, the nobleman, the man of the people, etc. "*La solie*," says

Petit de Julleville, "is universal satire put upon the stage and represented by *Sots*, whose fool's cap protects them from the resentment and anger which the boldness of their slander might provoke" (1).

M. Émile Picot, in his study of *La Sotie en France* (2), notes twenty-six of these pieces. He points out that the *sotie* was frequently given together with a *farce* and a *moralité* in those numerous performances which were similar to what is called in France a *spectacle coupé*; and in this case, the entertainment began with the *sotie*, a sort of ludicrous parade. The *sotie* did not always enjoy complete liberty; its most brilliant period was under Louis XII, who encouraged it as a means of serving and sustaining his home and foreign policies.

**The Principal Soties.** — In 1508, the *Enfants-sans-Souci* played *Le Nouveau Monde*, of which the author was probably André de la Vigne. This piece deals with the abolition of the *Pragmatic Sanction* by Louis XI, and the hopes for its re-establishment by Louis XII. Its method is allegorical, like that of the *moralité*.

In 1512, Pierre Gringoire, or Gringore (3) wrote and had represented *Le Jeu du Prince des Sots*, a piece in which he attacked violently, with the king's permission and in his presence, Pope Julius II and the Church. This work contains a large number of characters: the *Prince des Sots* represents King Louis XII; *Mère-Sotte*, the Church; *Sotte-Commune*, the people; *Sotte-Fiance* and *Sotte-Occasion* are ministers of the Church; the *Général d'Enfance* is perhaps Gaston de Foix; and there are also the *Seigneur du Plat-d'Argent*, the *Seigneur de la Lune*, etc. *Le Jeu du Prince des Sots* does not admit of any analysis: it is a series of satirical allusions, of *passing events* vividly expressed and promptly understood by contemporary spectators. It was followed by a *moralité* entitled: *Peuple Français*, *Peuple italique*, and *l'Homme obstiné*, also dealing with the quarrels between Louis XII and Pope Julius II: the latter being no other than the *homme obstiné* (4).

Among the *soties* of a more general significance we may mention: *Le Monde, Abus, les Sots* (1514 ?). While the weary world sleeps profoundly, Abuse brings on the stage Glorious Fool (soldier), Corrupt Fool (judge), Cheating Fool (merchant), Silly Fool (woman). These different fools desire to construct a new world. They build it upon pillars which are called Hypocrisy, Cowardice, Good-Living, Treason, Corruption, Usury, Tittle-Tatttle, Weakness, etc. But the Fools, who are joyously dancing, soon bump against the pillars, and everything falls down, the *World* reappearing just as it was before.

(1) *La Comédie et les Mœurs au moyen âge*.

(2) *La Sotie en France*, by EMILE PICOT, 8 vol., 1878. (Extract from *Romania*, t. VII.).

(3) Concerning Gringoire, see PETIT DE JULLEVILLE, *Les Comédiens en France au moyen âge*.

(4) Read an extract from *Le Jeu du Prince des Sots*, in AUBERTIN'S *Choix de Textes de l'ancien français* (Belin), p. 188.

## VI. — THE MONOLOGUE AND THE JOYOUS SERMON.

**The Monologue.** — The jugglers, as we have said, had a repertory of short pieces, constantly rejuvenated, *dramatic monologues*, in reciting which they perhaps wore special costumes, or at least certain accessories. Similar in invention



CLOWNS AND DEVILS JAWS OF HELL

*After a drawing of the XVII century.*

At this late epoch, clowns although they kept their traditional costume, were no more than acrobats and fools.

and style to Modern French monologues, these short pieces formed altogether a sort of satirical review of the different social classes. They are witty in tone, and essentially *comical*, in the truest sense of the word. Indeed, the character who speaks, displays naively all his own oddities and misadventures, making his auditors laugh at him without himself knowing that he is ridiculous. And it is in this that the mediæval monologue is so often superior to the monologue of the end of the nineteenth century.

About twenty of these *monologues* have been preserved. The characteristic types of the genre are: *La Chambrière à louer à tout faire*; *Le Varlet à louer à tout faire*; *Le Clerc de taverne* (tavern waiter); *Le Ramoneur*; *Le Vendeur de livres*, etc...

**Le Franc-Archer de Bagnolet** must be classed apart. It was composed about 1468, and has often been attributed, but without sufficient proof, to Villon. The *franc-archers* formed a sort of citizen militia; and each parish had to equip and support its own. But most of these communal soldiers became unpopular because of their cowardice, and abused the privileges of their position to blackmail and pillage the peasants.—In the monologue in question the *franc-archer* (dressed no doubt in a costume at once correct and amusing) begins by drawing his sword and provoking every passer-by. He describes shamelessly the combats from which he has run away, and boasts of it. A crowing cock gives him hope that there is somewhere nearby a poultry-yard to pillage. But as he is seeking his plunder, he sees in a field a scarecrow for sparrows, made of an old gendarme's coat filled with straw, with a white cross before and a black cross behind. The *franc-archer* falls to his knees in fear, and begs for mercy. He makes a long confession of his sins; he has stolen much, and has never killed anything but hens... But the wind blows down the scarecrow, the *franc-archer* drawing near sees his mistake, gradually resumes his bluster, and goes away more insolent than before (1).

Finally, the *Dit de l'Herberie* by Rutebeuf is a true *monologue*. In this a quack boasts of the extraordinary virtues of his drugs, especially of an herb (worm-wood) which cures all sorts of ills. This monologue is mixed prose and verse (2).

**The Sermon Joyeux.** — At the *Fête des Fous*, a student or a *clerc* preached in the church pulpit a parody of a sermon. After the *fous* were driven from the church, this genre survived and changed, though it retained the chief characteristics of its origin: a sacred text in Latin, a division under heads, citations from the Bible and the Fathers, a moral conclusion and a benediction. Furthermore, it was customary to begin every representation of a miracle play or a mystery with a sermon.

About thirty *sermons joyeux* have been preserved, the titles of which indicate their subjects: *Saint Raisin*, *Saint Hareng*, *Saint Jambon*, *Le Ménage et la Charge du mariage*, etc. Each one relates the so-called martyrdom of the *saint* in question. It is a kind of jesting as “old as the world,” and which is found in all literatures (cf. “*John Barleycorn*,” by the poet Burns).

## CONCLUSION.

The history of *medieval* comedy brings us to the second third of the sixteenth century. Certain *farces*, *soties* or *moralités* came after the appearance of the *Pléiade*. On the other hand, the *sotie* and the *moralité* vanished completely from the public stage after the last third of the sixteenth century. The *farces* continued to be given in spite of opposition from educated people who wanted to replace them by adaptations of ancient comedies.

We can follow in the sixteenth century, therefore, the normal development

(1) *Le Franc-archer de Bagnolet* is published in all the éditions of VILLON's works.

(2) Read extracts from *Le Dit de l'Herberie* in SUDRE's *Chrestomathie*. Compare the *Rutebeuf* of CLÉDAT (Hachette).



of the farce, and see it result — thanks to Italian and antique elements which were incorporated in it, and which enriched without altering its nature—in the comedy of Molière.

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THE SHEPHERDS OF THE NATIVITY

After a miniature in a manuscript of the end of the XIV century.



ORNAMENT IN MINIATURE

From a manuscript of the end of the XIV century.

## CHAPTER IX.

### HISTORY IN THE MIDDLE AGES. — THE SERMON.

#### SUMMARY

1. **HISTORY. — FIRST BEGINNINGS.** History was first written in Latin (Grégoire de Tours, VI century); then in French verse (very long poems like the *Brut* and the *Rou*, XII century); then, from the thirteenth century, in French prose. In 1274, the *Grandes Chroniques de Saint-Denis* began to be written in French.

2. **VILLEHARDOUIN** (1150-1213), marshal of Champagne, wrote *L'Histoire de la Conquête de Constantinople*, a simple and skilful narrative, in which he pleads the cause of those who had turned aside the Crusade from its primitive object.

3. **JÔINVILLE** (1224-1317). Towards the end of his long life, Joinville, urged by Jeanne de Navarre, wife of Philippe le Bel, wrote an *Histoire de Saint Louis*, in which he brings together, rather confusedly, certain little details with a narrative of the Crusade in which he took part. Its chief value lies in the naïveté and picturesqueness of the style.

4. **FROISSART** (1337-1410), at first merely a *clerc*, then curé of Lessines and canon of Chimay, was a chronicler by profession. He devoted the greater part of his *Chroniques*, in four books, to the Hundred Years' War. Not philosophical, he is valuable because of exactitude of detail and local colour.

5. **COMMINES** (1445-1511) left Charles the Bold to attach himself to Louis XI, whom he served faithfully, and to whom he devoted his *Memoires*. With less variety than Froissart, he was the first of the philosophical and moralizing historians.

II. **THE SERMON.** — Comparatively few mediæval sermons have been preserved. We possess some by **SAINT BERNARD** (died 1153), by **MAURICE DE SULLY** (died 1196), by **GERSON** (died 1429), by **MENOT** (died 1518) and by **MAILLARD** (died 1502).

# I

## HISTORY.

### I. — FIRST BEGINNINGS.



DECORATED LETTER  
from a manuscript of  
the VIII century.

**History written in Latin.** — The first enduring examples of French national history were written in Latin. We shall deal with them here simply as memorials, and to make known briefly the sources whence French annalists and chroniclers drew their material.

Grégoire de Tours (544-593) left a *Historia Francorum*, in which is found a narration of the events comprised between 397 and 591. This was continued to the year 644 by *Frédégaire* (died about 660?), to whose chronicle various anonymous contributions were added, which

bring the record down to 768.—From the eighth to the eleventh centuries, there was a whole series of chronicles and annals, lives of saints and kings, and narratives of crusades. The whole resulted in *La Chronique de Saint-Benoît*, *La Chronique de Saint-Germain-des-Prés* and, in the thirteenth century, in the *Historia regum Francorum*.

We do not possess the original version of the first poems written about the Crusades. Of these, Villehardouin's *Chronique* gives us the first true account.

Of the twelfth century, however, we possess a *Conquête de l'Irlande* (in about 3,500 verses); a *Vie de saint Thomas le martyr*, in 6,000 verses, by Garnier de Pont-Sainte-Maxence; a chronicle of the Anglo-Saxon kings (*L'Estorie des Angles*), in 6,000 verses, by Geoffroy Gaymard; and especially, the two long poems by Robert Wace: the *Brut* (history of the Britons, in which Brutus is made their patron hero), in 15,000 verses, and the *Rou* (Rollon, history of the Normans), in 16,500 verses. These two histories are continued in the *Chronique des ducs de Normandie*, in 42,000 verses by Benoist de Sainte-More. Finally, there has been recently discovered the life of *Guillaume le Maréchal*, a remarkable anonymous poem of about 20,000 verses (1).

(1) Concerning this poem, discovered by M. Paul Meyer, cf. G. PARIS, *Littérature au moyen âge*, § 63.

**History in French Prose.** — In the thirteenth century, Beaudouin IX, count of Flanders and future Emperor of Constantinople, had caused to be compiled, in French prose, all the preceding chronicles, under the title of *Histoire de Beaudouin*, the text of which is lost. Villehardouin's *Conquête de Constantinople* belongs to the beginning of the same century; we shall revert to this later. — Towards the end of this century the Abbot of Saint-Denis, Mathieu de Vendôme, caused a monk named Primat to make a French translation of all the preceding Latin chronicles, and the first edition, dedicated to Philip the Bold, appeared in 1274. This work was continued down to Charles V., and is a sort of official history bearing the title: *Grandes Chroniques de Saint-Denis*. After Charles V, the preparation of the *Grandes Chroniques* was confided to lay historiographers appointed by the king. The complete compilation brings us to the accession of Louis XI.

We shall study individually those writers who are customarily called the *four mediæval chroniclers*, and which are separated from each other by about a century: Villehardouin died in 1213; Joinville in 1317; Froissart in 1410 (?); Commines in 1511. — But between these dates were numerous other chroniclers, of whom we shall indicate the principal.

## II. — VILLEHARDOUIN (1150-1213).

**Biography.** — Geoffroy de Villehardouin was born in the castle of Villehardouin, situated about thirty kilometres east of Troyes, between Arcis-sur-Aube and Bar-sur-Aube. The exact date of his birth is unknown, but it must have occurred between the years 1150 and 1164. All that we know about him, previous to his departure on the Crusade, is that he was Marshal of Champagne from 1191. Of his biography we know only the period included in his *Mémoires*, from 1198 to 1207. Later on we find his name mentioned a few times in letters; and as his son Erard took the title of lord of Villehardouin in the year 1213, the death of Geoffroy at Messinople must have occurred then.

In fact, Villehardouin was never to see France again after leaving it in 1198 to go to Venice and negotiate for the transportation of the Crusaders to the Orient. His book gives us all the details of this expedition. He appears to have been both a clever diplomat and a brave knight. But his naïveté has often been exaggerated; for never was a man, under extremely difficult circumstances, more conscious and more shrewd, and we should not be deceived by the archaic character of his work. It is indeed hardly critical to attribute a childish character to men because they speak a language which is still in its infancy.

It was during the last years of his life, at Messinople, that Villehardouin wrote his *Mémoires*; and, as we shall see, his object was not so much to make an interesting narrative, as to justify himself in having contributed to the deviation of the expedition. The MS. soon became known in France and at Ve-



nice ; five copies are still extant, as well as a sixth which was transcribed in the fourteenth century by a Venitian. The first printed edition is that of du Cange (1657) ; the last, those of Natalis de Wailly (1872) and E. Bouchet (A. Lemerre, 1891).

**Analysis of the *Conquête de Constantinople*.** — This work is divided in Wailly's edition into 116 chapters, subdivided into 500 paragraphs. From the first paragraph we learn that Foulque, curé of Neuilly-sur-Marne, began to preach the Crusade in 1198. At the tournament of Ecri, in 1199, a great number of knights join the Crusade, among others Thibaud, Count de Champagne, and Louis, Count de Blois (1-10). — Then follow



THE CRUSADERS BEFORE CONSTANTINOPLE

From a miniature of the middle of the XIII century, in a manuscript of the *Conquête de Constantinople*.

the preliminary reunions of the Crusaders who, after numerous discussions, decide to go by way of the sea, and send ten commissioners to the Venitians. In this commission, Geoffroy de Villehardouin represents the Count de Champagne, and Conon de Béthune the Count de Flandre (Beaudoin IX., who was to be elected Emperor of Constantinople and to die fighting the Bulgarians in 1205). The doge Henri Dandolo receives them, and discusses in council their propositions. It is agreed that the Venitians are to furnish vessels for the Crusaders for the sum of 85,000 silver marks (about five million francs in French money) (11-24). — The agreement is ratified by a public assembly of the Venitians in the Church of Saint-Marc : it is a fine scene of enthusiasm (25-32) (1). — It is decided that the expedition shall leave Venice on June 24, 1202. Then the Champenois commissioners return to France, while the Flemings stay in Italy to win allies (33-34). Meanwhile, the chief of the expedition, Thibaud de Champagne, has died, and the command is given to Boniface de Montferrat. The Crusaders start, in June 1202, for Italy. At Venice the doge Dandolo and a large number of his subjects join the Crusade (35-69). — But there is already discord among the Crusaders, and some of them, refusing to embark from Venice, have travelled towards other ports. Also, they cannot collect the whole of the sum called for by their signed contract, and they must pledge themselves to pay the last part by the conquest of Zara, a Slavonian port taken from the republic by the King of Hungary, and which is restored to the Venitians (70-91).

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 93.

The Crusaders pass the winter at Zara; there they have received dangerous and seductive offers from the young Alexis IV, heir of the Emperor of Constantinople, Isaac the Angel who, seven years previously, had been dethroned by his brother. Alexis asks the Crusaders to restore him to his throne; he will recompense them with 200,000 silver marks and a reinforcement of 10,000 men for their expedition to Palestine (91-93). — The fleet sails; dissensions break out again among the Crusaders, and some of them go to Syria, while the Flemish fleet, sailing from Marseilles, instead of joining the expedition from Constantinople goes directly to Palestine. At Corfu there are more debates; all the efforts of the leaders and all the eloquence of Villehardouin are necessary to prevent the army from breaking up (94-120). — They come in sight of Constantinople, and are struck by its beauty (121-128); they camp at first opposite the city, and several councils are held to prepare the attack (129-153) (1). Then follows the first siege of Constantinople; and, in spite of the courageous efforts of the Crusaders, the city might have made a lengthy resistance if an internal revolution had not re-established on the throne the old Isaac, father of Alexis, who, escorted by the army of the Crusaders, made his solemn entry into Constantinople (154-194). Alexis, however, crowned Emperor on August 1, 1203, refuses to keep his promises. The Crusaders declare war against him. Another usurper, Murzuphle, strangles Alexis and takes possession of the throne. Then follows the second assault on Constantinople, and the flight of Murzuphle, and the Crusaders establish themselves in the city (195-232) (2). — There are two candidates for the empire: Beaudouin de Flandre and Boniface de Montferrat; whichever is not elected emperor will have the government of Asia Minor and Greece under the suzerainty of the other. Beaudouin is chosen Emperor and crowned. (133-261).

The remainder of the book has less interest for us, and may be rapidly summed up. To sustain and extend their conquest, the Crusaders make various campaigns against Murzuphle, who is taken and executed; against the Greeks, and especially against the Bulgarians whose emperor, Joannis, holds out intrepidly against them (262-353). — Beaudouin is defeated at Andrinople, and killed; his army is routed. Villehardouin has the glory of having directed this painful retreat of the army to Constantinople (354-376). — Beaudouin's brother Henry, at first made regent, is crowned emperor in 1206; Villehardouin receives the city of Messinople in fief; Boniface de Montferrat is killed in battle against the Bulgarians (376-500).

**The Historical Value of Villehardouin.** — The account given by Villehardouin has every appearance of the frankest and most naïve narrative. Events are given chronologically. The author speaks of himself in the third person, without intervening except with a few exclamations, or in giving a few impressions entirely objective in nature.

However, beyond doubt the work is a sort of plea, analogous in certain respects to Caesar's Commentaries. Never would this knight have written his *Mémoires* for the mere vain pleasure of telling his friends in France about events which were already celebrated; there is nothing in him of the professional historian, of the chronicler, of the *romancer*; this is quite evident in his style, and in the disdain with which he allows every occasion to describe or depict go by. — But he has written to offer an apology for an expedition which, though brilliant, was nevertheless turned aside from its object. And what an object!

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 95.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 52.

the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre. To what blameworthy ambition had the Crusaders yielded who, having set forth for holy places, besiege and take Constantinople, settle there, form fiefs for themselves in Turkey and Greece, instead of watering with their blood the deserts of Palestine! — If we are to believe Villehardouin, chance alone was the cause. Money was lacking, and it was necessary to take Zara; then it was thought advisable to accept the offers of the young Alexis. If he had kept his promises, after the first siege of Constantinople, they would have set sail for the Holy Land reinforced by 10,000 allies. The bad faith of Alexis detained the Crusaders, who lost time and used up their strength in this new empire.

A very interesting discussion has been held by several French and foreign savants concerning the veracity of Villehardouin (1). — M. Ch.-V. Langlois sums it up as follows :

“ The deviation of the fourth Crusade was certainly not caused by a sequence of chance events, as Villehardouin has wished us to believe. This operation was premeditated. Villehardouin was informed of the project, no matter what he says, long before the army in general. It is therefore true that the castellan of Messinople has tricked posterity. He has not wished to assume before them the responsible part he certainly played in the organisation of a campaign which was very profitable to the leading men of the Crusade, with very little benefit to the cause of Christendom, and the results of which appeared, even at the moment when he wrote, already compromised. It is equally true that his very marked apologetic tendency taints the judgments of our historian upon those who were adversaries of his designs. They are cowards, traitors, hypocrites. In a word, *La Conquête de Constantinople* was not written purely and simply *ad narrandum*; up to a certain point, it is a vindictory memoir (2).”

**The literary Value of Villehardouin.** — We are apt to wrong Villehardouin in seeking to define his *literary* merit. Villehardouin, treating of the most picturesque of subjects, sought nothing but clarity in the highest sense of the word. For a man who knows how to see, think and feel, clarity is the supreme art of presenting things and ideas in that order which is most likely to give the reader the illusion of truth, of the real truth, intellectual and moral. The reality of things is frequently confused and always complicated; by *clarity*, we organise reality, giving it again its absolute truth or its essential beauty. — In the work of Villehardouin, the *author* never interposes himself. There are no rounded descriptions, but there are short and vigorous touches which evoke a whole picture. There is no analysis of sentiments, but the precise notation of a deep impression, which he leaves the reader to complete. This simple and

(1) See note on Villehardouin in the *Extraits des Chroniqueurs français*, by G. PARIS and JEANROY (Hachette).

(2) *Histoire de la Littérature française* (PETIT DE JULLEVILLE, Colin), 1896, t. II, p. 286.

clear style is not without some stiffness, but chiefly, we must admit, for those who read old French with difficulty.

"Villehardouin's book," says Gaston Paris (1), "is one of the oldest enduring models of original French prose; it opens the series as worthily as the *Chanson de Roland* does that of poetry, and it still retains something of the epic tone from the preceding age; it recalls the *Roland* as Herodotus recalls Homer. In reading it, we seem to hear a manly voice, naturally sonorous, which with no help from art achieves the most powerful effect merely by its precision and simplicity (2)."

### III. — JOINVILLE (1224-1317).

**Biography.** — Jean, Sire de Joinville, was born in 1224 of a family already illustrious, and who were hereditary seneschals of Champagne. The castle of Joinville dominated the little village of that name on the Marne (3). Jean, who lost his father at the age of eight years, was early sent to the court of Thibaud IV of Champagne, to learn chivalry, courtesy and the *gai savoir*.

At the fêtes of Saumur in 1241, given in honour of the brother of Louis IX, Alphonse, count de Poitiers, Joinville fulfilled the functions of gentleman carver.

Made a knight in 1245, he went on a crusade with Louis IX in 1248, and it was not without emotion that he left his fine castle and his two children. He returned in 1254, after having valiantly performed his knightly duty at Damiette, at Mansourah, and especially during that sad captivity which served to increase his intimacy with the king. We know all this part of his life from his book.

(1) G. PARIS, *Littérature au moyen âge*, § 89.

(2) **From Villehardouin to Joinville.** — Nearly a century elapses between the death of Villehardouin and that of Joinville, who is, after the former, the most illustrious French chronicler. But, during this century, history continued to be written, and a few authors should be mentioned.

**Robert de Clari** has left, like Villehardouin, a narration of the fourth Crusade; "He represents", says G. PARIS, "the opinion of the humble, of the *« pauvres chevaliers »* and he gives us more picturesque details concerning Constantinople than Villehardouin."

**Henri de Valenciennes** had composed, about 1210, a rhymed chronicle about Henri, successor of Beaudoin de Flandre. Only a part of this chronicle, with the *rhymes taken out*, has survived; but, such as it is, it forms an interesting complement to Villehardouin and Robert de Clari.

**Philippe Mouskes or Mousket**, of Tournai, wrote a general history of France, from the siege of Troy to the year 1243, in 31,000 verses. As an historian he is particularly interesting from the time of Philippe-Auguste; but, for the preceding period, he has made use of *chansons de geste* now lost, whose traces are curiously followed in his text by the erudite.

**Guillaume Guiart**, of Orléans, relates in 12,000 verses, in his *Branche des royaux lignages*, the events which occurred between 1180 and 1306. He is remarkable for the accuracy of his military descriptions.

(3) Joinville is situated in the department of Haute-Marne, in the arrondissement of Vassy. The castle, which passed successively to the houses of Lorraine, Guise and Orléans, was demolished during the Revolution. The *charters* of the Joinville family were preserved, and we shall see later what use N. de Wailly has made of them.



Returning to his castle, he led the most peaceful existence, not caring to accompany Louis IX on his second crusade in 1270. During the many years of his old age he enjoyed great authority at the court of Champagne and that of France, and was charged with several missions requiring finesse, which he accomplished with intelligence. During the process for the canonisation of Louis IX, in 1282, he was called as a witness; and he participated in the fêtes celebrated in honour of the *beatification* of the king, to whom he had consecrated an altar in his chapel at Joinville. — Tradition relates that he composed his Memoirs at the request of Jeanne de Navarre, wife of Philippe le Bel. Jeanne having died in 1305, before Joinville had completed his work, he dedicated it in 1309 to Louis le Hutin, Count de Champagne and King of Navarre, who was later to become King Louis X of France. When Joinville was ninety years old, he could still accompany Louis X on his expedition to Flanders in 1345. He died in his castle on December 24, 1317.



THE TAKING OF DAMIETTE

*From a miniature of the beginning of the xiv century,  
in a manuscript of the History of Saint Louis.*

Joinville, with his sword high, immediately preceding the King, is easily recognised by his crowned helmet. The Duke of Brittany is seen in the second plan between Joinville and the King.

The earliest MSS. of Joinville are lost, the oldest existing one being a copy made in the fourteenth century, of which the language has been modernised. The first printed edition was that of Pierre de Rieux (Poitiers, 1547); then followed the edition of Ménard (1617) and Du Cange (1688). The only correct edition to day is that of Natalis de Wailly (1868), the text of which has been restored with the aid of the charters of the castle of Joinville.

**Analysis of the *Histoire de saint Louis*.** — This work is composed of 149 chapters, subdivided into 769 paragraphs. — Joinville himself tells us his plan: "La pre-

mière partie s'y divise comment il se gouverna tout son tens selonc Dieu et selonc l'Eglise, et au profit de son règne. La seconde partie dou livre si parle de ses granz chevaleries et de ses granz faiz d'armes" (§ 2) (1). — It should be noted that the first part comprises but 67 paragraphs of the 769.

Joinville first gives examples of the devotion of saint Louis (7-16), which would seem to have better been placed in the second part. — Then, in paragraphs 18 and 19, he plunges into a new preamble, announcing his plan again. — From Par. 20 to 25; Joinville speaks of Saint Louis' love of truth, of his temperance, of his manner of dressing. — It is impossible to find any order in the anecdotes which follow, and which are set down haphazard from an octogenarian's memory. Let us recall the most celebrated of these: the dialogue between Saint Louis and Joinville upon mortal sin (27-28); on the custom of washing the feet of the poor on Maundy Thursday (29); wisdom and probity (31-32) (2); how one should dress (35-38); the king dispensing justice seated under an oak at Vincennes, or in his garden in Paris (57-60); his firmness with the bishops (61-64); his honesty (65-67). — The second part begins with a few details of the birth and coronation of the king (69-70). Joinville then relates the earliest troubles in his reign, with many digressions; so he says, in paragraph 93: "Or revenons à nostre matière". — Description of the plenary court held at Saumur in 1241 (93-97). — The battle of Taillebourg (98-102), and the submission of the Count de la Marche, who had called the king of England into France (103-113). — The king, after an illness, vows to go on a crusade in 1244, and Joinville prepares to follow him (106-113). After a digression—(the story of a *clerc* who killed three of the king's sergeants who had robbed him), Joinville (119), begins the account of the crusade in which he took part (3), extending it to paragraph 666, not without adding many somewhat unexpected recollections. This is the least incoherent part of the book; Joinville is constantly on the stage, so to speak, and only refers to the king in connection with himself. — In paragraph 667, we seem to have reverted to the first part again: Joinville entertains us until paragraph 730 with the domestic and political virtues of the king, gives us once more details about his toilet, his sobriety, his firmness with the bishops, his justice, his love of peace, his horror of blasphemy, his charities, his police reforms, again his charities, his pious foundations. At paragraph 730 the story is again resumed: saint Louis goes for the second time on a crusade, and Joinville refuses to follow him. The details of this crusade are briefly given. "De la voie que il fist à Thunes (Tunis)," writes Joinville, "ne vueil-je riens conter ne dire, pour ce que je n'i fu pas, la merci Dieu! ne je ne vueil chose dire ne mettre en mon livre de quoy je ne soie certains." (738). — He contents himself with telling us the *counsel* which the king, being about to die, gave to his son Philippe (739-754). He then describes his death (4), an account of which was brought him by the Count d'Alençon (755-759). Then follow a few details concerning the canonisation of Saint Louis, and a dream of Joinville's (760-767).

**How Joinville composed his *Histoire de Saint Louis*.** — If we are to believe Joinville, this book was written in his extreme old age, and in a consecutive manner. He declares his plan in the beginning. At the end, he says: "Je fais savoir à touz que j'ai céans mis grant partie des faiz nostre saint roy devant dit, que j'ai veu et oy, et grant partie de ses faiz que j'ai trouvez, qui sont en un *romant*, lesquelz j'ai fait escrire en cest livre." This *romant* is a

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 98.

(2) Read the chief anecdotes in *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, pp. 99-103.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 103; 1st cycle, p. 56.

(4) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 57.

French chronicle inserted in the *Chroniques de Saint-Denis*, and corresponds with the paragraphs 740 to 754 of Joinville's work.

But the preceding analysis has shown that the *Histoire de Saint Louis* lacks essentially *composition* and *sequence*. It is formed of separate parts, and seems to have been finished twice and started afresh. Gaston Paris has closely studied its singular structure, and in an article in *Romania* (1), and then in volume XXXII of the *Histoire littéraire de la France*, he has established definitely the following conclusions: "The narrative of the crusade must have been a separate part, and constitutes true *Mémoires*, not at all designed for the special glorification of saint Louis. In fact, its hero is Joinville: he tells us his adventures, his difficulties, his manner of living, details which have absolutely nothing to do with saint Louis; the latter is never the central figure of the narrative, and is only referred to when in company with Joinville. This is, then, simply a collection of the seneschal's personal memoirs."



JOINVILLE OFFERS HIS *History of Saint Louis* TO THE KING LOUIS HUTIN

From a miniature of the beginning of the XIV century,  
in a manuscript of the *History of Saint Louis*.

These *Mémoires*, which comprise paragraphs 110 to 666, were probably composed about 1272. Though not a very succinct composition, at least this part of the work does not betray the senility of the octogenarian. When he resumes his *Mémoires* in order to add anecdotes relative to saint Louis, Joinville painfully gathers a number of incongruous recollections and *pads* his end with borrowings from a *romant*.

**The Historical Value of Joinville.** — It is a far cry from the *mastery* of Villehardouin to the somewhat superficial inquisitiveness of Joinville. But the latter was a loyal and frank witness, and reports with ingenuity all he saw or heard. And he has the gift of seeing; his eye is that of a primitive artist,

(1) *Romania*, 1894, p. 508

struck by silhouettes, colours, picturesque details of all kinds. Unfortunately, Joinville, too much occupied with details, never seeks to grasp the whole. His narrative of the crusade is a succession of trifling facts, more *amusing* than interesting, of fragmentary descriptions, naïve and often obscure (the battle of Mansourah), even of chatting which interrupts without clarifying the account. On the whole, his portrait of saint Louis is rather awkward. Perhaps Joinville's work in preserving the memory of one of the greatest of French kings has not been so valuable as generally supposed.

**The Literary Value of Joinville.** — Here it may be said for the first time in the history of French literature, "We thought to find an author, and we found a man." Joinville is a *man of wisdom and probity*, distinguished in mind and heart, and who talks. Do not read his book as an historical document, but seek therein the manner of thinking, feeling, seeing of a thirteenth century knight, and you will be fascinated and instructed. Though one may be compelled to speak with reserve of the historian, the faults pointed out become exquisite merits in the *causeur*. We have said that he only saw details; but what picturesque naïveté in what he relates about the Nile (187-190), about the Bedouins (249-253); of the Vieux de la Montagne (451-463). He sees at a glance the colour of the banners (198), the costumes (408), the appearance and the effects of the Greek fire (206 and 314), etc. He describes the battle of Mansourah like a knight who, having taken part in it himself was unable to see it as a whole, but tells with truthful realism all he has himself seen (cf. Stendhal's description of Waterloo in his "Chartreuse de Parme").

To this gift of *seeing* he adds a candid analysis of his sentiments. He admits his weaknesses; he does not like to dilute his wine (25), he does not disdain wealth (439); he has more horror of leprosy than of mortal sin (26-28); he is disgusted at the idea of washing the feet of the poor (29), etc. It is this sincerity which makes Joinville one of the most popular ancestors of the French. It gives his book exceptional rank among the *human documents* of the past (1).

#### IV. — FROISSART (1337-1410?).

**Biography.** — Born at Valenciennes in 1337, Froissart, concerning whose infancy we have only the few ordinary details which he gives in his poetry, went to England in 1361, to join the entourage of Queen Philippe de Hainaut, wife of

(1) **History from Joinville to Froissart** — Guillaume de Nangis (died 1302) wrote a Life of Saint Louis, the French version of which was inserted in the *Grandes Chroniques de Saint-Denis*. — *La Chronique des Quatre premiers Valois* (1327-1392) was written by a *clerc* of Rouen, who possessed genuine narrative talent. — Jean Lebel (1290-1370), canon of Liège, wrote *Vraies Chroniques* (1326-1361), the MS. of which was not completely recovered until 1862, by Paulin Paris. — The continuation of the *Grandes Chroniques* must always be noted, written for this period by a sort of official historiographer to Charles V., Pierre d'Orgemont.



Edward III. He presented to his patroness a book which he had made from the chronicle of his compatriot Jean Lebel, and which contained an account of events from 1356-1360. During the eight years he passed attached to the person of the queen as "clerc de sa chambre", Froissart composed many verses; but he chiefly profited by his situation to question numerous witnesses, both English and French, concerning the events he proposed to relate. Furthermore, he visited Scotland, Western France, and Italy; and it was at Rome in 1369 that he heard of the death of the Queen of England.

He returned to Flanders, and found a patron in the Duke de Brabant, Wenceslas, who gave him in 1373 the cure of Lessines in the environs of Mons in Hainaut. He was also protected at this time by Robert de Namur, lord de Beaufort, who was married to the sister of the Queen of England. It was then that Froissart wrote, for Wenceslas, the romance of *Méliador*, and for Robert de Namur the first book of his *Chroniques* in 1378. After the death of Wenceslas in 1383, Froissart found a new patron in Guy de Châtillon, Count de Blois, who made him canon of Chimay, and

attached him to his own person as chaplain. The count de Blois was a friend of France; and he balanced in Froissart's mind the English influence of Robert de Namur. In 1386, he accompanied Guy on his travels, after which he undertook a long excursion: in 1388, he went to Béarn, to gather more information at the court of Gaston Phébus, Count de Foix. During the long journey from Valenciennes to Orthez, Froissart made the most of the opportunity by questioning all sorts of witnesses; and in this regard he may be compared to a kind of *reporter*. At Pamiers he met one of Gaston's knights, Messire Espan du Leu, who served him as guide while telling him excellent stories. Froissart stayed three months at Orthez, where Gaston held his court. In February, 1389, he left



FROISSART OFFERS HIS *Chroniques* TO EDWARD III,  
KING OF ENGLAND

From a miniature of the end of the xiv century,  
in a manuscript of the *Chroniques* of Froissart.

Orthez, and went to Avignon, then to Auvergne where he attended the wedding of the Duke de Berry and Jeanne de Boulogne. In August he was again at Paris, for the solemn entry of Isabeau de Bavière.

Retiring to Valenciennes, he finished his second book, which he had begun in 1388, wrote his third in 1390, and began the fourth in 1392. In 1395 he returned to England, offered to Richard II a copy of his poetical works, passed three months at court, and returned to Valenciennes to complete his fourth book. He lost his patron, the Count de Blois, in 1397. In what year did he die? 1410 has long been cited as the date, but no mention of Froissart is found after 1404.

We possess many MSS. of Froissart's *Chroniques*. The first edition was published at the end of the fifteenth century in four folio volumes. Afterwards followed the edition of Buchon (1824), then that of Siméon Luce (1869-72), etc.

**Froissart's Chronicles.** — It is impossible to make an analysis of so extensive a work. We must content ourselves with indicating, book by book, those passages which are the most remarkable and the most frequently quoted.

In a *prologue* Froissart praises knightly courage, and invites all young knights to read his book in order to learn how to become valiant (1).

The *first book* contains an account of events between 1325 and 1378. In one whole part devoted to past events, Froissart makes use of the *Chroniques* of Jean Lebel. But he twice rewrote this first book, and his last version, made after 1400, is the most impartial.

We should note in this book: Edward III's campaign against the Scots in 1327 (ch. xxxiv-l); the battle of Cressy in 1346 (ch. lx) (2); the siege of Calais and the devotion of Eustache de Saint-Pierre 1346-47 (ch. lxxvi) (3); the combat of the Thirty, 1351 (ch. lxxxi); the battle of Poitiers, 1356 (ch. lxxviii) (4); the story of Etienne Marcel and his death, 1358 (ch. lxxx); the battle of Cocherel, 1364 (ch. lxxxviii); the sack of Limoges, 1369 (ch. cccxvi).

The *second book* includes the events between 1378 and 1385.—We should note: the famous story of the *rouliers* and their chief, Mérigot Marchès (ch. xlvii); [this account is continued in Book III (ch. xiv)]; the narration of the troubles in Flanders, 1382 (ch. llii-liii); the revolt of Wat Tyler in England, 1381 (ch. cvi-cxii).

The *third book* covers the period of 1385-1388. The most remarkable episodes are Froissart's journey to Béarn and his sojourn at the court at Orthez (ch. ii-xviii); and especially, the tragic death of the young son of Gaston Phébus (ch. xiii).

The *fourth book* deals with events occurring between 1388 and 1400. The following are notable: the exploits of the French knights at the jousts of Saint-Sugelleberth, near Calais (ch. vi and xii); the taking of the stronghold of Mont-Ventadour (ch. xi); the death of Gaston de Foix (ch. xxiii); Froissart's last journey to England (ch. xl), etc.

**The Historical Value of Froissart.** — The numerous *professional* chroniclers of the preceding centuries had been merely compilers. Their works are con-

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 105.

(2) — — 2nd cycle, p. 107.

(3) — — 2nd cycle, p. 110.

(4) — — 1st cycle, p. 60.

sulted for information, not read for themselves. They show exactitude and diligence; but we do not look to them for picturesque and vivid pictures of any epoch. Froissart was the first who undertook vividly to depict chivalry, with its costumes, its exploits, its fêtes, its castles. He was not himself a knight, but a curious spectator, dazzled by tourneys and battles. Not always spectator, either; it is true he did not see Cressy nor Poitiers, but he made squires and heralds talk about them, and even from the greatest lords he often gathered many details valuable for their very minuteness. And he was really an eye witness of some events: the troubles in Flanders, the *fêtes* of Riom, etc. He lived at the courts of England and Orthez; he knew Edward III and Richard II, Robert Bruce, King of Scotland, William Douglass, hero of the Scottish insurrection, the King of Cyprus, Pierre de Lusignan, and Gaston Phébus, Count de Foix. He saw Chaucer in England, and Petrarch in Italy. For guides he had Edward the Dispenser in England, and Messire Espan du Leu in Béarn. He travelled with Lords de la Trémouille and de Couci, and many others. We must remember that his patrons were extremely great and



#### HEROISM OF THE CITIZENS OF CALAIS

How Calais surrendered to the King of England, and the hardships the citizens suffered before surrendering.

*From a miniature of the end of the XIV century, in a manuscript of the Chronicles of Froissart.*

powerful lords, who took part in the most important events of a period as brilliant as it was troubled, and that he received in succession contradictory impressions, sometimes favourable to the English, sometimes to the French. Finally we must remark that Froissart belonged by birth and position neither to one camp nor the other.

The merits and defects of his *Chronicles* arise from the conditions under which they were written. We should not ask of him anything but *narratives* more or less connected, and of an accuracy quite objective. "He has marvelously painted his epoch," says M. Jeanroy, "though he understood it very little; he no more reflected upon the events whose narration gave him so much pleasure, than did those who brought him the tales, and who had been too intimately involved in the circumstances to understand their significance; every-

thing which was not perfectly evident, escaped him. For him the sense of the story was lost in its sound (1). " M. Jeanroy also points out his credulity, insensibility and indifference. " His true fatherland, " he says, " was the world of chivalry. His sympathies did not belong to a country, but to a special class ; on one side he placed knights, or soldiers in general, on the other citizens and peasants, of whatever nationality ; for the former he had esteem, for the latter an equally instinctive distrust (2). " In short, though he gives us a very animated and very entertaining picture of a society which was soon to be transformed and to disappear, yet, serious as his subject was, and rich in great lessons, he never attained the heights of the philosophy of history.

**The Literary Value of Froissart.** — But Froissart knew how to see, and he makes his readers see. He is a great artist. We do not learn, from his Chronicles, the sentiments of the fourteenth century ; but the appearance of his personages, their actions and their words, their costumes, castles, all live again before our eyes. And in this abundance of details there is no confusion ; every feature, every touch, every nuance is in its place. There was never a richer palette, nor an *illuminator's hand* more sure.

Let us add that never were colours more appropriately applied to the painting of diverse pictures. Sometimes it is a splendid and sanguinary battle—Cressy, Poitiers, Cocherel—where we see great masses of knights and men-at-arms moving against an accurately painted background, in good and correct order : the impression is tremendous, as reality would be. Sometimes it is fêtes and tournaments : banners, shields, tapestries, costumes, gold, steel make luminous spots which vibrate before us. Sometimes the chronicler, riding astride of his ambling nag, follows the highroad accompanied by his valets ; at his side is Messire Espan, who points out to him, sometimes at the right hand sometimes at the left, a castle, a forest, a vale ; and the anecdotes they tell cause the silhouettes of knights, of *routiers* and serfs to stand up amidst the pleasant landscape. Or perhaps it is some legend, like that of the fairy-women of Cephalonia, " worthy ", says Madame Darmsteter, " to be enshrined in a comedy of Shakespeare " (3). And Ch.-V. Langlois says (4), " His full-length portraits of Gaston Phébus and of Thomas of Gloucester, his Scottish landscapes and those of the Midi, place Froissart, among word-painters, by the side of Saint-Simon (5). "

(1) *Extraits des Chroniqueurs français* (Hachette), p. 186.

(2) *Id.*, p. 189.

(3) *Froissart*, by MARY DARMSTETER (Hachette), p. 171.

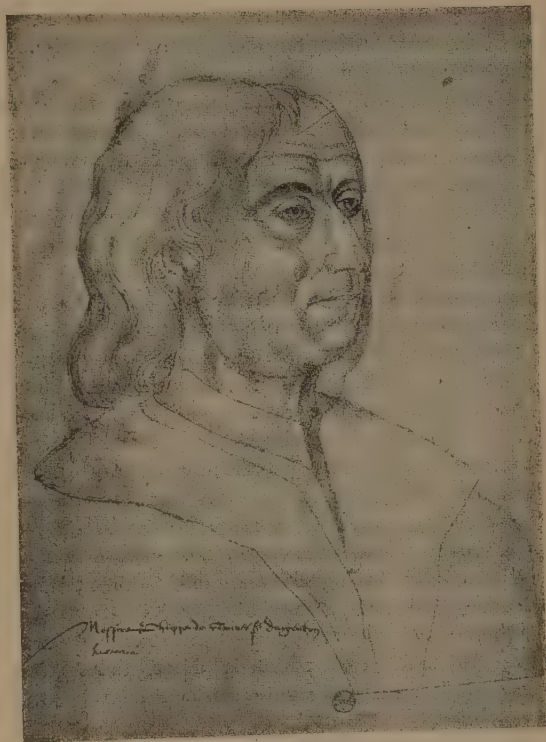
(4) *Histoire de la littérature française* (JULLEVILLE, Colin), t. II, p. 322.

(5) **Historical Works between Froissart and Commines.** — Should be cited : *Le Livre des faits et bonnes mœurs du sage roi Charles V*, written in 1403 by Christine de Pisan ; — Georges Chastelain, attached to the house of Bourgogne, has left a *Chronicle* covering 1419-1471 ; — Molinet succeeded him, and brought the *Chronicles* down from 1476 to 1506. — Enguerrand de Monstrelet continued the series of Burgundian chroniclers, and wrote the account of the years 1500-1544. — Olivier de la Marche, chamberlain to the Dukes of Burgundy, wrote *Mémoires* which cover the period from 1435 to 1488. — *Le Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris* (from 1405 to 1449) is also favour-



## V. — PHILIPPE DE COMMINES (1445-1511).

**Biography.** — Philippe Van den Clyte, lord de Commynes, was descended from a bourgeois Flemish family ennobled in the fourteenth century. He was born at Renescure, between 1445 and 1447, and his god-father was the Duke de Bourgogne, Philippe le Bon. His education was neglected, and he did not learn Latin. But he had a great talent for living languages, and besides Flemish and French he knew Italian, Spanish and German. Squire to Philippe de Bourgogne in 1464, he became favorite and chamberlain of the Count de Charolais, later Charles the Bold. He took part in the battle of Montlhéry in 1465, and in the campaign against the people of Liège in 1467. In 1468 he intervened in favour of Louis XI. after the interview at Peronne; and there is reason to believe that from this time the King of France sought to detach him from the service of Burgundy. — Meanwhile, in 1471 he went to England to bribe Lord Hastings, favorite of Edward IV, and from there he went to Brittany, and then to Spain, to clench certain intrigues against Louis XI. But the latter, profiting by Commynes' passage through



PORTRAIT OF COMMINES

From an original sketch of the beginning of the xvi century.

able to the house of Burgundy. — The official historiographer of the *Grandes Chroniques* was, under Charles VI, an anonymous monk of Saint Denis, whose Latin text was translated in 1430 by Jean Juvénal des Ursins (died 1473) and this translation forms the *Histoire du règne de Charles VI* from 1380-1422, the first edition of which was published in 1614. Juvénal des Ursins is valuable for details and anecdotes. — During the reign of Charles VII, the official historiographer was Jean Chartier, brother of Alain Chartier.

France, made him accept a pension. Finally, on August 7, 1472, Commynes openly abandoned Charles the Bold for Louis XI. It was a real betrayal, as the two princes were then engaged in a struggle, and Commynes brought the king of France, for money, all the secrets of his former master.

For this he was royally recompensed. Chamberlain and councillor to the king, with a pension of six thousand pounds, captain of the castle of Chinon, seneschal of Poitou, he married in 1473 Hélène de Chambes, whose dowry was 20,000 golden écus and twelve lordships. Louis also gave him the principality of Talmont, which he had seized from the family of La Trémoille, and which comprised 1,700 fiefs and sub-fiefs. He was thus the confidant and ambassador of a king who, spending nothing on his own person, never spared expense to buy and hold the services of unscrupulous followers.

On the death of Louis XI in 1483, Commynes was at first a member of the Council of the Regency. But Anne de Beaujeu, favourable to the La Trémoille, who had brought a suit against the usurper of their principality, did not like Commynes, and she allied herself with the party of the Duke d'Orléans, the future Louis XII. Commynes was arrested, despoiled of his property, imprisoned for eight months in an iron cage at Loches, and for twenty months in the Conciergerie at Paris, and was at length tried and acquitted. But the domain of the La Trémoille was never restored to him, and he was banished to his own estate. In 1490 he resumed his seat in the Council, and Charles VIII confided to him several diplomatic missions to Italy. He does not seem to have enjoyed much favour under Louis XII, though he accompanied the king to Milan in 1507. He died on October 18, 1511, at the age of sixty-four.

Commynes had written the first part of his *Mémoires* (covering events from 1464 to 1483) during the years 1488 to 1494; the second part he wrote at Argenton during the latter years of his life. Of the first part we possess four MSS.; the first printed edition appeared in 1524. We have no MS. of the second part, the first edition of which is dated 1528. The *Mémoires* were reprinted in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

**Analysis of the *Mémoires* of Commynes.** — The *Mémoires* are divided into eight books: the first six have to do with Charles the Bold and Louis XI; the last two, with the expeditions to Italy under Charles VIII, and a mention at the end of the coronation of Louis XII, May 27, 1498. We note the principal chapters:

*Book I.*—Préface (1).—Battle of Montlhéry (ch. iii-iv);—Louis XI. puts an end to the League for Public Good, and enters Paris (ch. viii);—in this connection first draws a portrait of Louis XI. (ch. x) (2).

*Book II.*—The interview at Péronne (ch. v-ix);—Chapter vi is a digression *Sur l'avantage que les bonnes lettres, et principalement les histoires, font aux princes et aux grands seigneurs* (3);—The expedition against the revolting Liégeois (ch. xi-xiii).

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 115.

(2) — — 2nd cycle, p. 116.

(3) — — 2nd cycle, p. 119.

*Book IV.*—History of the Constable de Saint-Pol (ch. vi-vii);—Interview between the Lord of Creville, ambassador from the Constable, and Louis XI (ch. viii);—capture of the Constable, his execution (ch. ix-x);—Reflections upon Fortune (ch. xi).

*Book V.*—This book is one of the most interesting, containing the account of the unfortunate campaigns of Charles the Bold against the Swiss, the battles of Granson and Morat in 1476 (ch. v-vi);—The siege of Nancy (ch. vii);—The death of Charles the Bold (ch. viii);—Eloquent reflections on his politics, his character and his fall (ch. ix) (1);—The resolutions made by Louis XI after the defeat and death of Charles (ch. x)—A fine essay on the *effets de la justice de Dieu* upon princes (ch. xiv) (2).—Commines' opinion upon the character of the French, and upon absolute government; it is here that he pleads in favour of the Estates General (ch. xix).

*Book VI.*—Commines, returning from a successful mission to Italy finds Louis XI ill; The life of the king at the castle of Plessis-les-Tours (ch. vi);—Interview between Louis XI and François de Paule, whom Commynes calls, we do not know why, Brother Robert (ch. vii);—Last interview between Louis XI and the Dauphin Charles (ch. x);—Reflections upon the evils endured by the king and those which he made others endure; details concerning Plessis-les-Tours; death of the king (ch. xi) (3);—*Discours sur la misère de la vie des hommes, et principalement des princes* (ch. xii).

*Book VII.*—Commines' negotiations in Italy; at Venice (ch. vi);—at Florence (ch. ix); Entry of Charles VIII into Naples (ch. xii);—His coronation (ch. xiv).

*Book VIII.*—Continuation of Charles VIII's expedition into Italy (ch. ii-v);—the passage of the artillery over the Apennines (ch. vii);—the battle of Fornoue (ch. ix-xi);—return of Charles VIII to France, his projects of reform (ch. xviii);—death of Charles VIII (ch. xxv);—obsequies of Charles VIII, and coronation of Louis XII (ch. xxvii).

**Historical and Moral Value of Commynes.**—In his dedication to the Archbishop of Vienne, Angelo Cato, Commynes declares that his only object is to furnish documents to this prelate, who wished to write in Latin a history of Louis XI. However this may be, his *Mémoires* possess, above every merit, that of being accurate and sincere: Commynes speaks only of what he has himself seen; he depicts only such personages as he has himself intimately known. Of Charles the Bold and Louis XI he has left final portraits; modern learning has only had to complete them. It is the same with regard to Louis XI's domestic and foreign policies, and of Charles VIII's expedition to Italy: Commynes gives the whole truth.

But though his facts are exact, and his characters well drawn, Commynes' real merit lies elsewhere: in his understanding of men and their actions. He thinks, and he frequently interrupts his narrative to share his reflections with us. And these are not vague or naïve confidences, but profound and penetrating ideas regarding the statesman, the philosopher and the moralist. In reading him we understand why he left Charles the Bold—that is, the thoughtless and brutal representative of all that was most narrow in the past, for Louis XI, the most thoughtful of French kings, the statesman of the future. Commynes is full of *ideas* which make him less like Machiavelli, whom he is too often said to resemble,

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 121.

(2) — — 1st cycle, p. 65.

(3) — — 2nd cycle, p. 125.

than Richelieu and Montesquieu; he is both the champion of the royal power against the *great vassals*, and of the Estates General which limit the absolutism of princes. He admires the English constitution, like a man of the eighteenth century. Again, he reminds one of Bossuet, when, after having so subtly analysed the human causes of success and failure, he ends with the theory of Providence and the mysterious action of God; and his reflections upon the death of Charles the Bold bear comparison with the *Oraisons funèbres*.

So, Commynes was a thinker, a statesman and moralist. Between his *Mémoires* and those of Joinville there is a great contrast; he is nearer related to Villehardouin.

**Literary Value of Commynes.** — Commynes has neither the picturesque brilliance of Froissart, nor the charm of Joinville. He writes heavily, and he never paints. But he has precision, finesse, his sallies hit the mark, and above all he has no literary affectation. "Commynes complains somewhere of lacking *literary skill*; a modern reader is completely disposed to congratulate him (1)." In his work we find witty pages (*L'Ours et les Trois Compagnons*) (2), and images and metaphors of the most striking precision, like those of Saint-Simon (3).—But he should especially be praised, when he rises to the consideration of religious and political subjects, for using a solemn, well-knit language, full of sense, which makes the same impression as the seventeenth century *grand style*.

## II.

### MEDÆVAL SERMONS.

It seems surprising how few French texts survive of a genre of literature more cultivated than any other in the Middle Ages, until we learn that the greater part of these texts came down to us in Latin, whether the preachers themselves made use of Latin, or whether their sermons, preached in French, had been prepared, written and preserved in Latin. There are even sermons written half in Latin, half in French: the macaronic style. Here we have a problem in criticism which is difficult and probably unsolvable. We must content ourselves with noting the chief preachers whose sermons in French have survived.

**SAINT BERNARD** (1091-1153). — Of Saint Bernard we have eighty-four sermons in French, translated from Latin at the beginning of the thirteenth

(1) JEANROY, *Extraits des Chroniqueurs* (Hachette), p. 354.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 63.

(3) JEANROY, *Extraits des Chroniqueurs*, (Hachette), p. 356.



century. Saint Bernard was an admirable orator, sometimes too subtle and scholastic for our taste, but full of unction and vehemence, strength and tenderness. He often evokes comparison with Bossuet (1).

**MAURICE DE SULLY** ( ? -1496). — Bishop of Paris, Maurice de Sully had great fame as a preacher. He has left a collection of his French sermons, which he prepared for his priests, and twenty MSS. of which have been discovered. These sermons were printed in 1484 and 1511. — Sully has an easy, pleasant and appealing eloquence. His sermons abound in anecdotes and examples. This may be seen in his delightful sermon for the third Sunday after Easter, in which he relates the legend of the monk who listened to the song of a bird (2).

**JACQUES DE VITRY** ( ? -1240). — Author of several historical and mystical works, Jacques de Vitry made a collection of numerous sermons as a sort of manual for the use of preachers. This collection is especially curious by reason of the *examples* it gives, in the form of anecdotes, legends, oriental and popular tales, etc. We have already pointed out the service which could be rendered by these *examples*, other mediaeval collections of which exist, to students of folk-lore.



Jean Gerson. — THE TREASURE OF WISDOM  
 "How Sapience speaks to the disciple, and shows him how  
 he could lead a holy and devout life."  
 This miniature, extracted from a manuscript of the treatise  
 of piety composed by Jean Gerson, dates only from the  
 beginning of the XVI century.

**GERSON** (1363-1429). — We pass over a long period, very rich, however, in celebrated preachers belonging either to the secular clergy or to the Franciscans and Preachers. In the thirteenth century, nearly three hundred preachers may be cited.—In the fourteenth century, Jean Charlier, born at Gerson,

(1) Read a French sermon by Saint Bernard in the *Choix...* of AUBERTIN (Belin), p. 249; another in CLÉDAT'S *Chrestomathie*, p. 395.  
 (2) Text given by AUBERTIN, p. 256; by CLÉDAT, p. 392.

Chancellor of the University, preached before the court from 1389 to 1397 in the church of Saint Paul. A few years later he became curé of the parish of Saint-

Jean-de-Grève, and for fifteen years he was a popular preacher. We possess about sixty French sermons by Gerson. We find in them a considerable abuse of allegory and scholasticism, but they possess unction, pathos, a sustained dignity which did not exclude vehement familiarity but never descended to the trivial (1).



Jean Gerson. — SECRET ASSEMBLY OF THE MAN  
MEDITATING WITH HIS SOUL

Miniature of the beginning of the xvi century, frontispiece composed by the Chancellor of the Paris University.

*Le Sermon de Bruges* (popularly called the *sermon tousseux*, because it is said that the author marked with *hem ! hem !* the places where he intended to stop and cough?) These three sermons give an idea of the original and powerful

**MENOT** (1440-1518), a Franciscan friar, enjoyed a great reputation. If we possess the true text of his sermons (the most celebrated of which are those on *Sainte Madeleine* and on *L'Enfant Prodigue*), Menot certainly mingled French and Latin in the most burlesque manner; but this did not prevent his having admirable moments of eloquence in the midst of his buffoonery.

**OLIVIER MAILLARD** (? -1502), was vicar-general to the French Franciscans, confessor to Charles VIII, and preached in many places from 1460 to 1502. His numerous sermons have been published in Latin; we have but three in French: *La Confession*, *La Passion* and

(1) Two fragments from Gerson are quoted by AUBERTIN, p. 308; CLÉDAT quotes his *Plainte de l'Université*, at once so ingenious and eloquent, p. 402.

animation of Maillard, who took his listeners to task and treated them, whatever their rank, with truly eloquent roughness.

In his *Passion*, which was preached at Laval in 1490, we may admire a realistic and pathetic picture of the death of Christ, which does not surprise in a contemporary of Villon (1).

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E. FAGUET, *Seizième siècle*, first chapter: *Commynes*, 1894.

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(1) Read extracts from the *Sermon de Bruges* and *La Passion* by O. Maillard, in AUBERTIN, p. 317.



THE DUKE OF BERRY AND HIS WIFE  
From a miniature of the XIV century.







DECORATED FRIEZE BY ETIENNE DELAULNE [1518 (?) - 1585 (?) ]

## SECOND PART.

# The Sixteenth Century

### FIRST CHAPTER.

## GENERAL SURVEY OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

### SUMMARY

1. **THE RENAISSANCE** is the period of French literature extending approximately between 1515 and 1610. This word expresses, by a happy metaphor, the awakening of letters and arts in the sixteenth century.

2. Among the **causes of the Renaissance** must be mentioned: **The Italian wars** (1494-1515), the invention of **printing** (1450), and the **Reformation** (1521).

3. **HUMANISM** is the disinterested study of antiquity, both from the **critical** and **æsthetic** points of view. Its first representatives were Italians like **PETRARCH**—(XIV century); **ERASMUS** in Holland (1467-1536), after which it spread throughout France, especially by the teaching of the **Collège Royal**, founded in 1529.

4. **THE SOCIAL CLASSES.** Under François I the court was a centre of elegance and taste. — The **aristocracy** protected men of letters. — The **clergy** adopted reforms after the **Council of Trent** (1545-1563). — The **middle classes** were better educated, and it was above all for them that Rabelais and Montaigne wrote.

5. **THE ARTS**, under Italian influence, were revived; this was also an epoch of important **scientific** discoveries.

6. Among **EXTERNAL INFLUENCES** must be noted that of **Italy** and of **Spain**; in England, **SHAKESPEARE** and **BACON**, who were unknown in France.

I. — DATES<sup>AND</sup> AND DEFINITIONS.

DECORATED LETTER  
used by Ch. Plantin.

THE name *Renaissance* is given to that period which extends approximately from the accession of François I (1515) to the death of Henri IV (1610). But these dates, like those which define the Middle Ages, have to be slightly altered with relation to the drama: *Mystères* were not prohibited until 1548, and sixteenth century tragedy did not begin until after 1550. On the other hand, Malherbe, who is classed in the classic period, had reached full maturity under Henri IV; and a writer such as Agrippa d'Aubigné, whose *Tragiques* did not appear until 1620, is regarded as a sixteenth century poet. We must therefore take account of schools and individual temperaments even more than of dates.

The word *Renaissance* expresses in the happiest manner, by a simple and poetic metaphor, the awakening of arts and letters at the opening of the sixteenth century. The ninth century (Charlemagne) and the thirteenth (Saint Louis) had already had their awakenings. But is it regrettable that the sixteenth century should have broken away from the Middle Ages, abandoned the national genres, and imitated Italy and especially the ancients? This question has long been settled. The fourteenth and particularly the fifteenth centuries were, so to speak, torpid. They continued Gothic Art, but altered it; they also deformed the literary genres, and produced nothing new except perhaps in drama.

But at the beginning of the sixteenth century everything awoke to new life. Life at court and castle was reorganised;—the citizen and rural classes acquired more and more social and political importance;—science tended to separate from theology;—the arts were secularised, religious architecture diminishing and private architecture developing;—the ideas of chivalry, decidedly upset by the Hundred Year's War, gave place to modern strategy;—literature abandoned, more and more, direct observation and realism, to draw substance from the sources of antiquity, and at the same time became more *individual* and more *æsthetic*.

What were the causes of this movement?

## II. — CAUSES OF THE RENAISSANCE.

**The Italian Wars (1495-1515).**— France had, throughout the Middle Ages, continuous relations with Italy, and until the fourteenth century the latter bor-

rowed from French literature. But in the fourteenth century occurred a sort of rupture. The rapid development of Italy, which had become freer and bolder, was not repeated in France. The campaign of Charles VIII in the kingdom of Naples, at the end of the fifteenth century, renewed contact between the two nations. Continued under Louis XII and François I, these expeditions established an uninterrupted connection.

**The Italian Renaissance.** — Italy, when the French arrived, had already been for two centuries in the enjoyment of a complete renaissance, and was then making ready to produce incomparable masterpieces in arts and letters. Dante had died in 1321, Petrarch in 1374, Boccaccio in 1375. The painter Giotto (died 1334) had freed Italian art from the imitation of the Byzantine. These men had left successors, and everything was in their favour. The political condition of Italy, the perpetual struggles between cities, between different parties in the same city, had given rise to local *tyrannies* which were as beneficial and propitious to arts and letters as they were fatal to individual liberty. The Sforza family at Milan, the Este at Ferrara, the Medici at Florence favoured poets and artists. At Rome the Popes kept architects and sculptors at work perfecting the beauty of the Eternal City.

After the Turkish conquest of Constantinople (1453), a great number of learned Greeks took refuge in Italy, bringing with them, to princes and Universities, such MSS. as had escaped fire and pillage, and they were given professorships for the teaching of their language. Italy, furthermore, had never ceased to study the language of Homer and Plato; and Petrarch, already an old man, took lessons in Greek. But in the second half of the fifteenth century, Greek culture reflowered everywhere in Italy and the Platonic Academy at Florence, under the patronage of Cosmo de Medici, became a center of enthusiasm and erudition.

Then magnificent libraries were founded: the Medicis enriched Florence with that of the monastery of San Marco; Cardinal Bessarion bequeathed his to Venice; Nicolas V established the *Valican* (1); each city and monastery wished to have now its own library, so that even to day the MSS. preserved in these collections form the basis of all scholarly editions.

In Italy, the arts followed the same movement: the names of Giotto, Brunelleschi, Ghiberti, Donatello prepare us, as early as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, for the marvels of painting, sculpture and architecture of the sixteenth.

Finally, the most delicate and varied taste was characteristic of Italian life from the fourteenth century onward, whether the life of courts, of castles, or of cities. At Florence, Venice, Rome, Milan, Urbino, Ferrara, Bologna, Verona,

(1) The famous *Ambrosian* of Milan dates only from the seventeenth century; it was founded by Cardinal Frederic Borromeo.

everybody was an artist and connoisseur. As it had formerly been at Athens, the citizen and the man of the people, as well as the great lord, instinctively loved beauty. The most humble monument, religious or civil, public or private, had its own distinction and originality. The splendour of the sky, the harmony of the landscapes and the elegance of the architecture formed an admirable background for these strong and supple bodies which, draped in silken cloaks or plebeian rags, assumed quite naturally the most statuesque poses.

This thrilling life, of art, of liberty, of curiosity, must have forcibly impressed the soldiers of Charles VIII, Louis XII and François I; and the Italian expeditions are justly considered one of the essential causes of the French Renaissance (1).

**Printing.** — At the beginning of the fifteenth century, Coster de Harlem, had printed pictures of the saints, with legends, by means of *wood-engraving*. It is said to have been he who first used characters cut out of wood for printing by hand the inscriptions on pictures. But it was Gutenberg who invented movable characters of metal, as well as the method of grouping them so as to form *plates* from which any number of copies could be drawn by means of a machine moved by the arm. The first printed work was the Bible of Gutenberg, produced at Mayence in 1450 and known as the *Mazarine Bible*.

At first, the printers, who printed on vellum, to which were added by hand the initial letters of chapters, titles, etc., wished their books to be considered as manuscripts and sold them very dear. But from the end of the fifteenth century printing-shops were established in Paris and Venice, and soon appeared everywhere. The new industry, however, met with much opposition. The Parisian corporation of copyists appealed to Parliament, so that it was necessary for King Louis XI himself to undertake the defence of the printers and accord them privileges, which were confirmed and extended by Louis XII and François I. The most famous printers of the sixteenth century were, in France, the *Estiennes*, and in Italy the *Aldi* of Venice.

The consequences of the discovery of printing should be considered from two points of view :

1. In the first place, that of the *fixation of the texts*. We can realize how the works of Greek and Latin authors must have been garbled, passing as they did, from MS. to MS., subjected to the blunders of copyists, and especially the corrections made by pedants. It was indeed time these texts *should be definitely fixed*, by means of comparison between all the discovered MSS., and the correction of one by another. It seemed that an end would now be put to the disastrous changes made in mediæval works by their constantly being brought up to date; the original MSS. could still be consulted, and *the true text* of the *Roland*

(1) GEBHART, *les Origines de la Renaissance en Italie*, Hachette.





PORTRAIT OF FRANÇOIS PREMIER IN MAJESTY  
After a miniature taken from the *Chronicles* of Jean Dutillet

or of *Renaud de Montauban* could be published. But unfortunately, the practice of printing coincided, in France, with the craze for antiquity and disdain of the Middle Ages. Three centuries were to pass before the printers deigned to notice these French manuscripts, the greater part of which had deteriorated or been lost.—Still, at least the greater part of the Greek and Latin Mss. could be made definitive from the sixteenth century onward, and new works escaped the fate of the mediæval poems. The texts of a Marot or a Rabelais were authentically printed under the eyes of their authors; and thenceforward only one subject for complaint remained: that the printing-press also preserves, to encumber our libraries, every sort of human stupidity.

2. The printing-press was to produce a still more important result. This was the indefinite multiplication of copies of both ancient and contemporary authors, and thus to popularise a knowledge of them and their use. The MSS. of certain ancient authors were so rare and costly that the masters themselves only possessed extracts or *résumés*. Students were generally obliged to limit themselves to copying a few passages of Virgil or Cicero; but in the sixteenth century one could consult the complete text of Aristotle and Plato, possess all of Homer and Horace. New books especially, which up till then had been reserved for a very few of the initiated, and whose ideas were circulated but slowly even in the world of letters, were now, from their first appearance, within reach of everybody. Then only could rise and spread what is called *public opinion*.

**The Reformation.**—The Reformation, prepared by Wickliffe in England (XIV century), and by John Huss in Bohemia (XV century), began with the separation of Luther from the Catholic Church (1521); and all of Northern Germany broke with Rome in order to adopt a *reformed* Christianity. England followed the movement under Henry VIII in 1534. After this, Geneva became the centre of *Calvinism*, which was introduced into France by Théodore de Bèze.

It is not for us to take up the history of the Reformation, or discuss it. It suffices for us to note its importance and influence from the point of view of social, intellectual and literary evolution. The Reformation is the greatest fact of modern times. Carried out as an act of faith, and not in the least—as a later view of it leads us to imagine—as a *philosophical* reaction, it was to have consequences which its promulgators never suspected. Luther desired to bring back his compatriots to a stricter practice of Christianity. As an apostle he was animated by an ardent, exalted, intolerant faith. Calvin went still farther: his more troubled faith resulted in the dogma of predestination, and he became a religious leader more absolute than the Pope. The Reformation, therefore, did not contribute to the development of a taste for art and letters, but quite the contrary, proscribing as it did any return to Pagan antiquity. But, upon what was the Reformation founded? Upon the *study of the Bible*, a German translation of which Luther published in 1534, that each one might read, meditate and

reach his own reasons for belief, and principles of action. It was the break with *tradition* and *authority*; it was the appeal to individual reason, and consequently liberty of thought.

Liberty of thought, or, as was said at first, unrestrained examination (*le libre examen*), was the element contributed by the Reformation to the Renaissance. In fact, though the bulk of protestants did nothing more than pass from one authority to another; and though, while reading the Bible themselves, they accepted all the same, each in his own sect, the authority of a pastor, yet the bolder minds—the learned, the humanists—who had only rallied to the Reformation to escape from the Church, lost no time in escaping also from Luther and Calvin. These made more liberal use of the principle of unrestrained examination, and introduced broadcast the *critical spirit*—that which, without considering the consequences of a discovery or of an idea, has for sole object to advance the development of science, and expose what it believes to be the truth.

Therefore, the three chief causes of the Renaissance were *Italy*, *printing* and the *Reformation*.

### III — THE NEW LITERARY SPIRIT.

**The Study of the Humanities.** — The French of the Middle Ages were not ignorant of antiquity; but they had either misunderstood it or not studied it thoroughly. With regard to this period they lacked the *historical sense*. By a singular contradiction, while admitting that Christianity had altered the whole aspect of the world, they did not feel the profound differences which separated pagan from Christian society. On the other hand, they were blind to the æsthetic beauty of ancient works. In Virgil they saw nothing but a prophet; in Homer nothing but facts and adventures. It should be added that, as we have said, the greater part of the original texts were unknown to them. Of the Latins they had a certain amount of knowledge, but of the Greeks they conceived the most false ideas from compilations or Byzantine imitations.

The Italians, and notably Petrarch, had from the fourteenth century applied themselves to the *humanities*, that is, the disinterested *critical* and *æsthetic* study of antiquity. A *humanist* is not, then, according to the current and vague sense of the word in the French language (*humaniste*), a cultured man, capable of quoting from Horace or of following the literary movement of his time; but a *humanist*, of whom Petrarch is the type, is at once a savant and an artist. He knows how to read a manuscript, how to prepare a critical edition, to discover and correct a copyist's mistake, how to comment upon an author by comparison with history and other texts. At the same time, he seeks in his author a portrayal and analysis of human sentiments at a certain time, without being preoccupied with any thesis of his own. Finally, he is sensitive to beauty of form; he can distinguish Diodorus from Herodotus, and Statius from Virgil. Petrarch's

*Letters* teach us what an Italian humanist was in the fourteenth century; and for two centuries longer Italy was to be the country of humanism.

Meanwhile, **ERASMUS** (1467-1536), an indefatigable worker with an unprejudiced mind, a savant without pedantry, a man of taste without narrowness, exercised in his turn, at Rotterdam, an intellectual influence akin to that of Petrarch. His *Adages*, in which he comments on all the ancient proverbs, revealed to his contemporaries the life of the ancients in all its details. He corresponded incessantly with all the savants of Europe, and formed a sort of *republic of letters* in which, without attention to frontiers, and thanks to the universal and international language which Latin then was, all the superior minds fraternised.

**Study of the Humanities in France.** — Humanism was to spread quickly in France, where the taste for literature and psychology was innate. But men of learning seemed suspicious to the Sorbonne, and it was to group them, and enable them to exercise an influence through teaching, that François I founded, by the advice of Budé, the *Collège Royal*, which later became the *Collège de France* (1529). The original character of this establishment is not now apparent, as its teaching is almost parallel with that of the *Faculté des Lettres* and of the *Faculté des Sciences*. But in the sixteenth century everything at the *Faculté des Arts* was subordinated to scholasticism and theology, and neither Greek, Hebrew, classical Latin, nor, of course, pure or applied sciences were taught there. — The names of Vatable, Turnèbe, Lambin, Ramus, etc., represented the great movement toward humanism encouraged by the king in spite of the Sorbonne. This movement, furthermore, was quickly propagated by printing, translations, and by the making of admirable works of reference such as the *Thesaurus linguae latinae* of Robert Estienne and Henri Estienne's *Thesaurus linguae graecae*.

**Education.** — We shall see, by Rabelais' criticisms against the *sorboniqueurs* and pedants, that there was in the sixteenth century a veritable crisis in education. The Universities had lost their prestige; mediæval philosophy had become nothing more than a machine that turns without working. Toward the end of the century the tendency became more and more marked toward education which should be both *literary* and *scientific*, freed from all theological bias, and for the realisation of a certain equilibrium between intellectual and physical education. But no reforms develop more slowly than those of pedagogy, and Latin remained for two more centuries, almost exclusively the basis of education. At least, the undigested compilations, ridiculed by Rabelais, began to be abandoned in favour of a direct study of the texts.

**Literature.** — Influenced by this intellectual movement, literary taste changed. The Middle Ages were interested only in the *subject*, whether adventures,





FRANÇOIS I SURROUNDED BY THE LITERATI, LORDS AND SCRIBES

*From a contemporary miniature.*

On the left of the picture, Antoine Macault, the King's secretary, is giving a lecture of the translation which he has composed of Diódore de Sicile, to François I.

morals, or satire. Hence their disdain for style, and consequently their frequent incapacity for permanently *enshrining* a subject, no matter how good, and which was thus left to pass easily from one ephemeral form to another. In the sixteenth century the study of the ancients taught the value of *style*, and from this resulted, to a certain degree, that crisis of ridiculous *formalism* to which poetry was first subjected by the *grands rhétoriciens*. Then the exaggerations diminished, and we see Marot give to "airy nothings" that elegant and precise turn which assures duration: above all we see Ronsard borrowing style and even a language from the ancients and the Italians, so strongly does he feel that the *form* of a work of art must be strong and carefully wrought to resist the wear of time. Prose, on its side, separated from Latin, cleared up its vocabulary, regularised its syntax, and aspired to eloquence or wit. Henceforward we feel that the writer, whoever he was, desires that his work, as conceived and written by himself, should pass to posterity under his own name.

#### IV. — THE SOCIAL CLASSES.

The literature of the sixteenth century was no longer, like that of the Middle Ages, drawn from direct and realistic observation. It took its models sometimes from Italy, sometimes from the ancients, or it analysed the soul. Therefore, we no longer ask how it represented the various classes of society, but rather in what *milieu* it was produced; because the author who writes to be read desires to please, and it is well to know to whom he addresses himself.

**The Court.** — The institution of the Court dates really from François I. The king-knight, so seductive by his wit and courage that the nation condoned his vices, was the first to group in one center all the nobility, and to create Court life and the courtier. The hierarchy and etiquette were substituted for the more simple social relations of preceding reigns. The women, by their beauty, wit and elegance, were the arbiters of this court. The lord could no longer isolate himself sulkily in his château, obtaining by fear or by esteem the favours of the king. He was now obliged to come to "pay his court", to be personally known to the king, and solicit favours from him, obtaining them and giving his thanks by assiduous attendance on the monarch.

At this court a conventional taste was formed, which changed according to different influences but always retained its unity. The poet, to please the court, made himself a *poet-courtier*. Marot and Mellin de Saint-Gelais knew how things must be said delicately and gallantly in speaking to the King or the ladies. Ronsard, who began by protesting against court-poetry, yielded to the court's new taste for Italianism, and "Petrarchised". It cannot be denied, on the other hand, that from François I to Henri III, the court, though too partial

and encouraging to certain affectations, possessed a broad and liberal taste. François I was quite sensible of the value of Marot, whom he rescued several times from his persecutors. Henri II applauded Jodelle's first tragedy, and took Amyot as tutor for his son. Charles IX protected and encouraged Ronsard, and Henri III understood Montaigne.

**The Aristocracy.** — Thus centralised and disciplined by the court, the aristocracy had less character and independence than in the Middle Ages. It gave itself especially to fêtes and receptions, in which such luxury was indulged in that laws were necessary to restrict it. It ruined itself with festal armour and costumes. Furthermore, it did not live solely in the king's palace, but, in imitation of Italy, substituted for feudal fortresses pleasure-châteaux. The king set the example, and went with his court to Fontainebleau, Blois, Chambord. The great lords, also, built summer residences, near woods which served as background, and which had no more water in their moats than would suffice for a lady's mirror. The custom began of making luxurious trips to the country, whither they carried all that was necessary for social life, and where balls and other entertainments brought together numerous invited guests (1). The wealthy lord was honoured for playing the Mæcenas. They



A PRINCESS OF FRANCE HUMANIST

Margaret, Queen of Navarre, daughter of Henry II,  
first wife of Henri IV.

*From the original drawing of François Clouet.*

(1) Among the chief private châteaux may be mentioned *Gaillon* and *Meudon* (belonging to the Cardinal de Bourbon), *Chantilly* (to the Duke de Montmorency), *Verneuil* (to the Duke de Nemours), etc.

protected and pensioned poets, and made them compose charades, madrigals and *étreennes* (1); and they accepted dedications flattering to their vanity. Look over the work of all these poets and prose-writers, and you will find the names of many great lords to whom were dedicated or addressed their verses, their essays, translations, dictionaries, and who, at once courtiers and humanists, were capable of contributing to the progress of letters. But here was no longer the liberty of the Middle Ages, and we should seek vainly in the sixteenth century for independent poetry like that of Rutebeuf, Eustache Deschamps and François Villon. The satire of Joachim du Bellay, the poet-courtier, is a cry of indignation to which no echo replies.

**The Clergy.** — The Church, which for an instant had been shaken by the Reformation, had felt the need of reform. For this purpose was summoned the *Council of Trent*, which worked from 1545 to 1563, and which resulted, from the point of view of the hierarchy and of discipline, in the reorganization and strengthening of the Church. On the other hand, numerous religious orders were created, having for their special mission to fight protestantism. The most celebrated of these was the order of the *Jesuits*, founded in 1534 by Ignatius de Loyola, and which, thanks to its constitution, rapidly acquired European influence. In this connection should be noted its many colleges at Paris and in the provinces, which before long were filled by the children of the nobility and upper middle class, of whom they endeavoured especially to make *humanists*. They proved such strong and brilliant rivals to the University colleges, that the latter brought several suits against them. But though Parliament banished them in 1595, they were able to re-open their colleges in 1604, and again met with the same success.

The higher clergy acquired the habit of frequenting the court, and abuses began to arise in the bestowal of bishoprics and other benefices which were in the gift of the king. At the same time, many cardinals and bishops became the patrons of poets and learned men, and consecrated a large part of their revenues to pensioning men of letters or Scientists. Often, too, a bishopric became the prize for services rendered to letters or for fine literary works, and it was thus that Amyot received the bishopric of Auxerre. Finally, so far as concerns the clergy, though protestant and *free-thinking* writers redoubled their attacks against them, catholics no longer enjoyed the same license as in the Middle Ages, at least in France. Especially during the second half of the century they became less tolerant, and Rabelais was the last representative of a liberty which was to be more and more restrained.

**The Bourgeoisie and the People.** — In the sixteenth century the *grande bourgeoisie*, or upper middle classes, consisted of magistrates, lawyers, doctors, and

(1) A sort of monotonous madrigal addressed to maids and matrons of the court.



men of learning. Its members filled the Parlements (1), the tribunals, the various councils, the court of state accounts. All the employments, except high military rank, were accessible to it. And as its members were industrious, patient and ambitious, they penetrated everywhere. They constituted, from this period, the truly substantial and serious part of the nation. Now, all civil officers had studied law and letters, and came from the colleges of the University or those of the Jesuits. The bourgeois, therefore, were no longer as formerly the naïve and good-natured auditors of the jugglers and the dramatic brotherhoods; they had developed literary taste. Only this taste remained *gaulois*, although broadened by learning, and common sense dominated imagination. It is necessary, then, to take into account this great middle public to whom Montaigne and Rabelais addressed themselves much more than to the court. It may even be said that the *bourgeoisie* finished by imposing generally its moderate and reasonable taste, less deformed by the abuse of the



AN ASSEMBLY OF THE PARIS UNIVERSITY  
From a miniature of the middle of the xvi century.

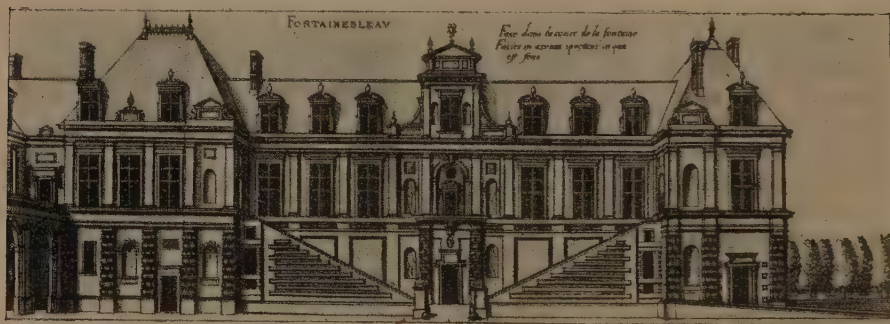
(1) Superior courts of Justice, so called previous to 1789. *Translator's note.*

influence of antiquity and of foreign literatures. Ronsard would not please this audience, but it recognised itself in Malherbe.

Had the people any influence upon the literature of the sixteenth century?—They occupied a large place in the works of the Middle Ages ; but now, between the literature of the *humanists*, of the *court* and of the *bourgeoisie*, they found no foothold. The type of the man of the people was to become *conventional* in literature, was more remote from the experience of writers, and was no longer to be observed directly from life ; in fact, *realism* only reappeared much later.

## V. — ARTS AND SCIENCES.

**Arts.** — Though the influence of Italy was felt in French architecture, yet there was also a French architectural renaissance. Chambord and the Louvre



THE FAÇADE OF THE CASTLE OF FONTAINEBLEAU

were built by French architects ; the Château d'Anet and the Tuileries by **Philibert Delorme**. For civic buildings, French architects abandoned the Gothic style for forms imitated from the antique : columns, architraves, pediments, friezes, etc. In religious art the Gothic was preserved ; but a few churches, such as Saint-Eustache and Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, at Paris, were peculiar manifestations of a new art.

Sculptors of genius appeared in the sixteenth century, uniting in their work the feeling for truth bequeathed by the Middle Ages with the influence of Italian and antique models and a more perfect knowledge of the nude. The chief of these were **Germain Pilon**, **Jean Goujon** and **Jean Cousin**.

Painting was less remarkable, and does not sustain comparison with that of

Italy. But **Clouet's** portraits are, in their class, masterpieces of observation and reality (1).

**Sciences.** — The era of great scientific discoveries began in the sixteenth century. It is sufficient to recall the name of **Copernicus**, who affirmed that the earth turns around the sun, of **Tycho-Brahe**, one of the greatest names in astronomy, of **Jansen** who invented the microscope. In mathematics should be noted the name of **Cardan**, who developed algebraic equations to the fourth degree, and was followed by several eminent savants. At the same time, anatomy was studied by **Vesalius** and **Ambroise Paré**; the circulation of the blood was discovered, etc. After this, French medicine made astonishing progress.

But the most illustrious scientific mind of this time belonged to England: **Francis Bacon** (died 1626) published in 1609 his *Novum Organum*, in which he exposed the principles of the experimental method.

## VI. — EXTERNAL INFLUENCES.

We have already pointed out the influence of the *Italian wars* and of the *Reformation*. We must now note:

**The Great Geographical Discoveries** of the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries—(America, route to the Indies by way of the Cape, missions in China, etc.)—presented new openings for European activity. There were also *mémoires*, narratives of travel, etc., which struck the popular imagination, but had, it must be admitted, no influence upon literature then too closely absorbed by the study of the humanities.

**Foreign Literatures.** — Italian literature exercised a preponderant influence upon France, especially through its fourteenth century writers, **Petrarch** and **Boccaccio**. We shall see to what an extent French poets and story-tellers were inspired by them. Political writers studied **Machiavelli** (died 1527), and the Italian buffoons introduced into the court of Henry III a taste for comedy with a plot. Italian fashions invaded the court, *Italianism* spoiled the language. The reaction only came under Henri IV. But let us note here the dates of the principal Italian masterpieces of the sixteenth century: *Orlando furioso*, by **Ariosto** (1515); *Il Principe*, by Machiavelli (1518); *Aminta*, by **Tasso** (1571), and his *Jerusalem Delivered* (1575).

From Spain, the *Amadis* returned to France (1550-1556) through the translat-

(1) This question, only indicated here, has been treated fully in many excellent works. See *Histoire générale des Beaux Arts* by ROGER PEYRE. Paris, Delagrave.

ion of **Herberay des Essarts**.—In 1572 the Portuguese **Camoens** (died 1579) published his poem *Os Lusiades*.

In England, it suffices to mention **Thomas More** (died 1533), historian and statesman; **Spenser** (died 1599); **Francis Bacon** (died 1626), already noted; and various dramatic poets, predecessors of *Shakespeare* who was born in 1564, and began to produce his works in 1588. But Shakespeare seems to have been totally unknown in France in the sixteenth and even in the seventeenth century.

The only important German works were those of **Luther** (died 1546)—especially his translation of the Bible,—and the poems of **Hans Sachs** (died 1576).



THE BOTTOM OF A LAMP

By Etienne Delaulne [1518 (?)–1585 (?)].





DECORATIVE FRIEZE BY ETIENNE DELAUNE [1518 (?) - 1585 (?) ]

## CHAPTER II.

### CLÉMENT MAROT.

POETRY FROM 1500 TO 1549.

#### SUMMARY

1. **THE GRANDS RHÉTORIQUEURS.** By this name are designated those poets at the courts of Burgundy, and of Malines in Flanders, who wrote short poems of fixed and complicated form. The chief are : **CHASTELAIN, MOINET, CRÉTIN**, and especially **JEAN LE MAIRE DE BELGES** (1473-1525).

2. **CLÉMENT MAROT** (1497-1544), attached at first to Marguerite d'Alençon, later to François I, was several times exiled, and died at Turin. Being court poet, he would have composed nothing but short elegant pieces if his misfortunes had not driven him to write about himself; and in that lay his originality. His language is clear and pure; and the seventeenth century preferred him to Ronsard.

3. **AMONG HIS CONTEMPORARIES, MARGUERITE D'ALENÇON**, afterwards Queen of Navarre, composed religious poetry. **MELLIN DE SAINT-GELAIS** was the type of the court poet.

4. **THE SCHOOL OF LYONS** recanted poetry to nobler subjects, written in an almost symbolic style. The chief poets of this school were **HEROËT, MAURICE SCÈVE**, and **LOUISE LABBÉ**.

## I. — THE GRANDS RHÉTORIQUEURS.



DECORATED LETTER  
used by Chr. Plantin

THE period between Villon (whose *Grand Testament* was written in 1461) and the manifesto of the Pléiade (1549) was a time of transition for French poetry. Between these two dates, the only famous name is that of Clément Marot. But there were many poets, and before coming to Marot, we should name a few of them, in order to discover if *versification*, if not poetry, is indebted to them for some progress.

It can be said that the first of the *rhétoriqueurs*, in point of time, was Alain Chartier, "father of French eloquence". *Rhetoric* is the art of correct expression; and in the fifteenth century more and more importance was given to form. In fact, the grave mistake of the imitators of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun had been a "sterile abundance." It seems that at that time a poet worthy of the name must write from 4,000 to 20,000 verses; and until the middle of the sixteenth century length was the great merit of the authors of the *Mystères*. A reaction set in, which was exaggerated but necessary, and poets no longer wished to write anything but short poems of *fixed form*.

The *rhétoriqueurs* were especially the poets of the court of Burgundy, and of Malines in Flanders, grouped around Marguerite d'Autriche, and finally those of the court of France, patronised by Anne de Bretagne. It should be observed that some of these poets were at the same time chroniclers, historiographers, savants, and sometimes wits.

Their poetic rules were in substance the same as those of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. But the genres — *lai*, *virelai*, *rondeau*, *ballade*, *servantois*, *chant royal* — had become more complicated, and their technical difficulties had been greatly increased. Molinet published, in 1493, *l'Art et Science de Rhétorique*, in which the rules for these genres are given; but to know them still better we must resort to the *Grand et vray art de pleine rhétorique*, by Pierre Fabri (1521): this is the veritable *art poétique* of the predecessors of Marot. The fixed rules of a genre became complicated with tricks of rhyme. The rhyme was called *équivoquée* when it was formed with a pun (thus Marot couples *rimailleurs* and *rime ailleurs*; Crétin, *louange* with *loup ange*, *au souffre irait* with *souffrirait*, etc.); the *echoing rhyme* repeated twice or thrice the final sound, or the whole word (Crétin wrote: "*Par ces vins vers, Atropos a trop os...*" and: "*Qui pour chanter à sa corde s'accorde,*" "*Mal prend son chant; amour telle est mortelle*"); in the rhyme *annexée* and *fratrisée*, is repeated at the beginning of a line all or part of the word forming the preceding rhyme: in the rhyme

*batelée*, the rhyme is repeated at the cæsura of the following verse; in the rhyme *renforcée*, the cæsuras are rhymed, so that a piece written by this rule, in alexandrines, can be read in three different ways: first, in reading the twelve syllables consecutively of each line, then in reading one column in verses of six feet, and a second the same. It should be added that certain pieces were written in such fashion that when read from top to bottom they possessed a positive sense, and from bottom to top a negative. Sometimes the verses could be read backwards. In short, there is not a childish fancy that may not be found among the poets of this period. (1)

**GEORGES CHASTELAIN** (1403-1475), wrote, in verse, *Les Épitaphes d'Hector et d'Achille avec le jugement d'Alexandre le Grand*, and *Les Douze Dames de Rhétorique*. These are masterpieces of bad taste, allegorical, pedantic and obscure. But Chastelain merely sought distraction in his verse; his title to fame lay in his *Chronicle* of the Dukes of Burgundy.

**JEAN MOLINET** (died 1507) was canon of Valenciennes, historiographer of the house of Burgundy, librarian to Marguerite d'Autriche. He wrote a *Chronicle* which continues that of Chastelain. He had a considerable reputation as a poet, but his poetry was not published until 1531. It is possible that we take much too seriously certain jocose verses which are always quoted with a sort of virtuous indignation, but which must have been regarded at Malines merely as good-natured plays upon words, such as:

" Molinet n'est sans bruit ni sans nom, non.  
Il a son son, et, comme tu vois, voix;  
Son doux plaid plaît mieux que ne fait ton ton... "

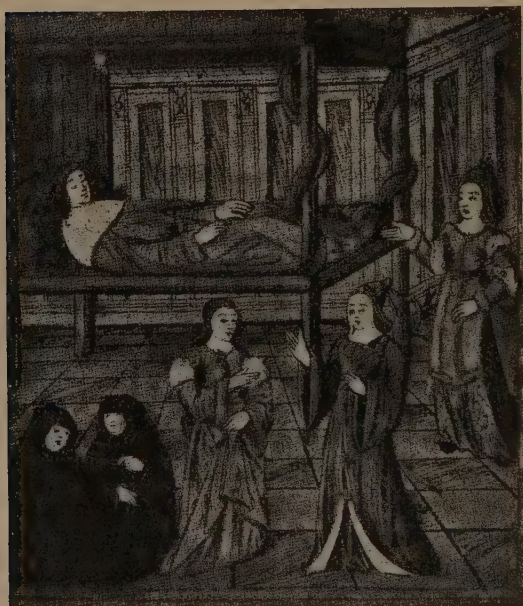
**JEAN MESCHINOT** (1420-1490) may be considered as the type of the *poète rhétoriqueur*. He lived at the court of Brittany, in the service of the dukes and of the Duchess Anne, before her marriage to Charles VIII. He wrote a poem, *Les Lunettes des Princes*, which went through about thirty editions in fifty years. It is a laborious allegory, though sometimes amusing. Dame Reason gives the poet spectacles which will enable him to read in the book of Conscience. One of the glasses of the spectacles is Prudence, the other Justice; and they are set in a bone, Force, fastened by a nail, Temperance. The rhymes are *équivoquées*. He wrote also an *Oraison qui se peut dire par huit ou par seize vers, tant en rétrogradant que autrement, tellement qu'elle se peut lire en trente-deux manières différentes, et à chacune y aura sens et rime*.

With **GUILLAUME CRÉTIN** (died 1525), the art of the *grands rhétoriqueurs* invaded the French court. Crétin was precentor of the Sainte-Chapelle in

(1) Numerous examples may be found in the *Recueil des poésies françaises des quatorzième et quinzième siècles*, by AN. DE MONTAIGLON (41 vol., Bibliothèque elzévirienne).

Paris, and historiographer to François I. He wrote twelve books of *Chronicles* in verse; but was chiefly famous for his poems (*chants royaux, épigrammes, ballades...*). Marot appears to have admired "*le bon Crétin au vers équivoqué*"; but Etienne Pasquier tells us that Rabelais represented him "*sous le nom de Raminagrobis (old tabby), vieux poète français*" (1).

**JEAN LE MAIRE DE BELGES.** — This poet must be set apart from and



THE LAMENT OF THE DEATH OF LOUIS DE LUXEMBOURG  
BY JEAN LE MAIRE DE BELGES

After a miniature in a manuscript of the  
beginning of the xvi century.

above all these *rhétoriciens* (who were, we may believe, men of merit but too much given to wordy trifling); he was the real predecessor of Clément Marot and the Pléiade. Jean Le Maire was born at Bavay, in Hainaut, in 1473 (2). Nephew and godson of Molinet, he received from him his first lessons in poetry. Successively clerk of finance in the service of the King of France, secretary to the Duke de Luxembourg, he became in 1503 librarian to Marguerite d'Autriche (3); finally he was employed by Anne de Bretagne, and probably died towards 1525.

Among the poetical works of Jean Le Maire should be noted: *La Plainte du Désiré* (Dame Nature comes, with Painting and Rhetoric, to weep over the coffin of Louis de Luxembourg). In this work, as well as in the *Temple*

*d'honneur et de vertus*, Le Maire seems a belated imitator of the *Roman de la*

(1) Some of Crétin's verse may be found in *Le Seizième siècle*, by DARMSTETER-HATZFELD, p. 82.

(2) He is called *de Belges*, because Bavay was regarded as the ancient capital of the province of Belgium.

(3) *Marguerite d'Autriche* (1480-1530) was daughter of the Archduke Maximilien, who was Emperor of Germany from 1493 to 1519, and of Marie de Bourgogne (daughter of Charles the Bold). She married Philibert de Savoie (1504), and governed, as Regent, the Low Countries. She held her court at Malines. She ranks among the most illustrious patrons of letters and art (Cf. F. THIBAUT'S *Marguerite d'Autriche et Jean Le Maire*, Paris, 1888).



*Rose*. In the *Couronne margaritique* we again find many allegories: Death, Virtue, Misfortune, Prudence. *Les Epîtres de l'Amant vert* are more interesting. *L'Amant vert* is a parrot which has just died, and from the shades sends verses to his grieving mistress Marguerite; the lady replies in two impassioned epistles. There are a few ingenious descriptions, and a courteous or affected gallantry, sometimes piquant.—As a poet, Le Maire is chiefly valuable for his craftsmanship. His verse is firm to the point of harshness, the epithet is always true and well applied, and he has a feeling for rhythm. By his merits and also his defects (abuse of learning, diminutives, compound words, etc.) he heralds the Pléiade.

But his most important work was written in prose, and bears the rather singular title of *Illustrations de la Gaule et Singularités de Troie* which appeared in 1542-1543. In this Le Maire is the continuator of Benoît de Sainte-More (*Roman de Troie*, twelfth century), and the predecessor of Ronsard (*La Franciade*). We know that the Middle Ages ascribed the foundation of the Kingdom of France to Francus, son of Hector. Le Maire takes up this legend, penetrating as far as possible into the past. In his first book he tells the story of the deluge, the history of Noah, of Cham, Osiris, Dardanus and Paris; in the second book, the Trojan war; in the third, the migrations of the Trojans and their settlement in Gaul. It would be wrong to infer, from these rapid indications, that the book is an undigested and absurd compilation. The *Illustrations* contain good descriptive passages, romantic pieces like the story of Paris and Oenone, which possess charm and tenderness, and a few ideas upon the origin of European peoples which are not without interest. The imitation of antiquity is often ingenious and direct; the author knows his Homer and how to borrow images from him. In short, the explanation of the success of the *Illustrations de Gaule* lies in the fact that at that period the taste for antiquity was reviving before the approaching Renaissance.

## II. — CLÉMENT MAROT (1497-1544).

First, a word about the father of Clément, **JEAN DES MARES**, called **MAROT** (1463-1523). Born at Mathieu, near Caen, Jean Marot married at Cahors and settled there until 1507, when he became secretary to Anne de Bretagne. He wrote for her *Le Doctrinal des Princesses et des Nobles Dames*, in twenty-four *rondeaux*, and the *Vraie-disant avocate des dames*, in *rondeaux* and *ballades*. By these two works Jean Marot belongs to the group of the *grands rhétoriciens*; but he became poet-historiographer, and composed, to aid Louis XII in his quarrel with Pope Julius II, a *Voyage de Gênes* and a *Voyage de Venise*, which have much more originality and value. In these he recounts the expeditions of the king (whom he accompanied to Venice), and his verses, with varied rhythms, have precision and animation. Jean Marot wrote for François I, to whom he had become *valet de chambre*, an *Epître sur la défaite des Suisses* à

*Marignan*. But he wrought better than that: he taught the art of verse to his son Clément, and inspired him with a taste for poetry.

**Biography of Clément Marot.**—He was born at Cahors in 1496 or 1497. In an *Eglogue au Roy* (1539) (1) he tells us of his childhood, his games, his horror for the tutors of the college, and his gratitude to his father. He seems to have had a good knowledge of Latin; his favourite authors were Virgil (whose first eclogue he translated in verse at the age of fifteen), Ovid, Catulus and Martial. He read Petrarch in the original; admired Alain Chartier, the *Roman de la Rose*, Villon, etc. He studied music, and composed a few melodies. In short, from infancy, Clément Marot had an alert and inquiring mind, and was a great reader; and he must have belonged to the *Basoche* or the *Enfants-sans-Souci*. As page in the service of Nicolas de Neufville, lord of Villeroi, he composed his first poetry there; and in 1515 he dedicated to François I his *Temple de Cupido*. A gentleman of the chamber, M. de Pothau, presented him in 1518 to Marguerite, the king's sister (2), then duchess d'Alençon, and Marot brought her his epistle *Le Despourvu*, written in the allegorical style of Guillaume de Lorris. Marot became valet de chambre to Marguerite (3), and in 1521 he accompanied the Duke d'Alençon to the camp of Attigny, near Rethel (4).

In 1525, Marot followed the royal army into Italy, was wounded at Pavia and made prisoner, but was immediately set at liberty (5). His misfortunes began in this year, and this *gentil poète* was henceforward to lead the most singularly agitated life. In fact, in February, 1526, he was arrested and imprisoned in the Châtelet, probably as a heretic. From prison he wrote to his friend, Lyon Jamet de Sensay in Poitou, recounting in charming verse the fable of the lion and the rat, and begging him to come to his aid (6). Lyon Jamet bethought him of a stratagem which would be possible owing to the diversity in the jurisdiction of the time: he caused the Bishop of Chartres to claim Marot for a crime previously committed in his diocese. Marot, released from the Châtelet, was carried to Chartres, and lived nearly three months at the Eagle inn without being disturbed. There he gave himself the mischievous pleasure of cursing his judges, and composed his *Enfer*; he also prepared his edition of the *Roman de la Rose* which appeared in 1527. Pardoned by François I (7) in May, 1526, Marot requested, at the end of this same year, to be made successor to his father who had just died, and he became *valet de chambre* to the king (8).

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 128.

(2) Cf. p. 227.

(3) *Ballade à Madame d'Alençon pour estre couché en son estat* (1518). — *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 67.

(4) *Épîtres* III and IV.

(5) *Élégies* I, III, IV.

(6) *Épître* XL. — *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 130.

(7) *Rondeau* LXVII.

(8) *Épître* XXXV.

In October, 1527, more trouble occurred. Marot, while attempting to save a prisoner from the archers of the watch, was himself arrested and obliged to appeal to the pity of François I (1), and on November 4, the king ordered, that his "*cher et bien-aimé valet de chambre ordinaire Clément Marot*" be set at liberty.

In 1532 appeared l'*Adolescence clémentine*, the first collection of Marot's poetry; but the poet had scarcely tasted his success when he fell seriously ill, and during his illness a suit was brought against him for heresy which, thanks to the direct intervention of Marguerite, came to nothing. Robbed by a valet, and without money, Marot addressed to the king one of his most charming petitions (2). Being restored to favour, he published an edition of Villon (1532), and passed two fairly tranquil years in composing many *rondeaux*, *étrennes* epigrams, *ballades*. He was then a court poet in the most banal sense of the word.

In 1534, while the court was sojourning at the château d'Amboise, placards, containing abuse of the Catholic religion, were pasted on the doors of the apartments, even that of the king himself, on the night of the 17-18 of October. François I, in a fury, ordered arrests and punishments. The houses of a number of suspected persons, including Marot—whose name stood seventh on a list of seventy-three—were searched in Paris. Learning that the police had seized his papers, and fearing to be punished for those who were guilty, Marot fled to Nérac to take refuge near Marguerite who had become Queen of



PORTRAIT OF CLÉMENT MAROT

From an anonymous print of the XVI century.

(1) Épitre XXVII. — *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 68.

(2) Épitre XXIX. — *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 133.

Navarre. She detained him for several months, and then advised him to go to Italy. Marot left, leaving with Marguerite his young son Michel, as page (1536).

Clément sought refuge at Ferrara, where Renée de France, daughter of Louis II and Anne de Bretagne, was established, having married in 1528 the Duke Ercole d'Esta, son of Alfonso d'Esta and Lucretia Borgia. This court was one of the most illustrious in Italy. Alfonso and his brother, Cardinal Ippolito d'Esta, had been the patrons of Ariosto, and the same court was made famous later by the genius and misfortunes of Tasso. Renée was favourable to the Reformation. Marot addressed a beautiful epistle of welcome to her (1). He was immediately at his ease in this society at once free and lettered, where he met charming and intellectual French women, among others Madame de Soubise and her two daughters, Anne and Renée de Parthenay. And before long Rabelais came to Ferrara (1536), and in 1538 Calvin (2).

In spite of the happy and secure life he led at Ferrara, Marot tried to prepare for a return to France, and wrote an epistle to the king to solicit his indulgence (3), but received no answer. He then addressed an epistle to the Dauphin, but again had no reply (4). Finally, during the winter of 1536-1537 he was recalled (5). He returned by way of Lyons, where he went through the solemn ceremony of abjuration. He received the most flattering welcome from the poets of Lyons, especially Maurice Scève and his sisters, Claudine and Sibylle. After a month's stay at Lyons, he returned to Paris.

On coming again to the Louvre, he saluted his friends and protectors with the *Dieu gard à la cour*; then, he devoted himself to versifying pleasant passing events, writing *étrennes*, epigrams, etc. But, on the other hand, he seems to have leaned to more serious subjects, translating in verse two dialogues of Erasmus, publishing the *Chant royal chrestien*, the *Cantique de la chrétienté sur la venue de l'empereur et du roy au voyage de Nice*, the *Églogue au roy sous les noms de Pan et de Robin* (1538) (6). Finally, in 1539, he presented to François I thirty psalms which he had just published. The success of this translation was considerable, but it compromised Marot again. The Protestants adopted his French version, and the courtiers hummed his psalms to profane airs. Condemned and pursued, Marot fled to Geneva, where, in 1543, he published a new edition of his psalms to the number of fifty. But the too free Marot could not adapt himself to a stay in Geneva; perhaps he was forced to leave. He passed through

(1) Épitre XLVII. Cf. Épigr. XXXI.

(2) Renée, more and more inclined towards the Reformation, was imprisoned by her husband in 1554, and returned to France in 1559. She retired to Montargis, where she took part in the religious wars, and where she died. Her children were: Alphonse II, d'Este, Duke of Ferrara; Anne, married to the Duke de Guise, who was assassinated in February 1563; and Léonore, beloved of Tasso.

(3) Épitre XLII.

(4) Épitre XLIII. The Dauphin was soon to die, at Tournon.

(5) Épitre XLVIII.

(6) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 128.



Chambéry, visited the battlefield of Cérisoles, and arrived at Turin, to die there in 1544. His faithful friend, Lyon Jamet, raised a monument to him in the Church of San Giovanni.

**Marot's Works.** — *Principal pieces.*—First, several poems, rather longer than his usual verses: *Le Temple de Cupido*, an allegory in which reappear all the characters of *Le Roman de la Rose*, a work of youth and transition, often very clever in detail; *l'Enfer*, composed in 1526, at the Eagle Inn in Chartres, was not published until 1542, by Etienne Dolet, who put a preface to it. *L'Enfer* was the Châtelet; Marot draws a close comparison between the hell of the pagans and the prison. At the door he meets Cerberus; then Minos (Jean de la Bane, provost of Paris); he perceives a mass of serpents (the law-suits, of which he enumerates the different forms); he appears before Rhadamantus (Jean Morin, civil lieutenant), in whose mouth he puts an artful and hypocritical discourse. Marot tells us how he plead before Jean Morin; this speech merits being read entirely for its curious details of the life and ideas of Marot. Le Griffon (the registrar) takes notes. Rhadamantus rises, and has Marot reconducted to the common hall where he finds his companions in misfortune.—The short pieces by Marot may be classed thus: 65 *épîtres* (of which we have already named the principal ones);—27 *élégies*, or gallant epistles, the greater part of which are addressed to unknown persons, very difficult to identify: some are timely pieces, on the death of various personages (*élégie XXII. Du riche infortuné Jacques de Beaune, seigneur de Semblançay, 1527.* It is Semblançay who speaks, after his death, from the top of the gallows of Montfaucon; it is an interesting imitation of Villon's famous ballad of the hanged);—15 *ballades*: the best turned are, the 3rd, *De frère Lubin* and the 5th, *A Madame d'Alençon pour estre couché en son estat*; the ballads composed about historic events are the weakest; one of the most celebrated, and most obscure, is the 14th, the refrain of which, *Prenez-le, il a mangé le lard*, refers perhaps to the denunciations which caused Marot's first imprisonment;—80 *rondeaux*, a few of which are witty, the 2nd having for subject the rules for the rondeau (cf. the *Rondeau* by Voiture, *Ma foi, c'est fait de moi...*); the 8th, *A un poète ignorant* (*Qu'on mesne aux champs ce coquardeau...*); the 23rd, *A ses amys* (*Il n'en est rien...*); the 38th, probably addressed to Marguerite d'Alençon (*Un mardy gras...*); the 62nd, (*Au bon vieux temps un train d'amour régnait*);—54 *étrennes*;—294 *épigrammes*, a genre in which Marot excelled. The *épigramme XL*, on the death of Semblançay, is well known (1), also the *LXXXIX*, to the Queen of Navarre, on his creditors, the *LXVIII*, *Ouy et Nenny*, etc.;—la *CXXXIII*, *De soy mesme et d'un riche ignorant* (2).—42 *chansons*;—17 *épitaphes*, ironical and amusing;—35 *cimetières*, or serious epitaphs;—5 *complaintes*, or funeral elegies, the 3rd of which, entitled *Déplorations sur la mort de Florimond Robertet*, contains a discourse made by Death “à tous humains”, which is Marot's finest effort in the direction of great poetry;—finally, by adding 22 various songs, 50 psalms and 11 prayers, a translation of an eclogue of Virgil, of two books of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and 5 prefaces in prose (for *Le Roman de la Rose* in 1527, and for Villon in 1532), we have the complete works of Marot.

**Marot's Originality.** — We have given Marot's biography in detail to bring out, first of all, this essential point: here was a poet of facile talent, who could turn an *étrene* gallantly, sing a *ballade* wittily and point an epigram. In that society, both polite and licentious, he was an *entertainer*, almost always full of tact and taste; he could seize instantly any passing event, social or political,

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 137.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 71.

and nature made him for pleasing the great and especially ladies. Left to live happily at court, he would have remained all his life the court poet, a precursor of Voiture. But, he was twice imprisoned, twice exiled; he was obliged to solicit pardon, to appeal to the king, to Renée de France, to the Dauphin; he had to clear himself of terrible accusations to escape the gallows or being burned at the stake; and these catastrophes, which seemed to bruise his poetic life, compelled him to abandon amiable conventionalities and allegories *à la mode*. He bewailed, perhaps, losing his time and his talent in recounting his miseries, and begging for pardon, and money, yet this necessity forced him to resort to some of the true sources of poetry, grief, nostalgia, remorse; it forced him to elevate his tone, to quit badinage, to write his avenging descriptions in *l'Enfer*, to plead eloquently against the *sorboniqueurs*. Was he not, within due proportions, an admirable proof of what Musset was to say later on: *Les chants désespérés sont les chants les plus beaux... Rien ne nous rend si grands qu'une grande douleur...*

But even in his complaints or denunciations, Marot is always Marot. His inspiration is limited; he does not truly know how to see, to feel or depict. His are lively and rapid impressions. He was born a courtier and knew that discretion is necessary when living with the great. He sighed more than he wept; while a tear impearled his eye, a corner of his lips smiled. In short, he was the *gentil Marot*; he was neither a Villon nor a Musset.

The best judgment upon Marot is therefore Boileau's—not in his short history of French poetry, from Villon to Malherbe (*Art poétique*, I, v. 419)—but in verse 96. Boileau has been speaking in severe terms of burlesque; is that to say that he forbids bantering? To this objection he replies, *Imitez de Marot l'élégant badinage*. Marot trifles; he treats no subject with real seriousness, neither the gravest nor the most personal. He is always witty, and never more so than when he seeks to veil the sadness of sentiment in the grace of form. For Boileau, Marot is an “*honnête homme*”, a poet for society and the salon, who could read his verses in a lady's alcove, who was restrained, and possessed the delicate art of suggesting what should not be said.

**Marot's Fame.** — From these causes resulted the great and continuous success of Marot in the seventeenth century. Boileau was not his only admirer: La Fontaine was in love with him too. Bussy-Rabutin, Fénelon, La Bruyère, Father Bouhours, poets and critics, all joined in his praise. In the eighteenth century Voltaire and Rousseau agreed in liking him.

This success he owed not less to his style and language than to his wit. What did La Bruyère say? “Marot, by his manner and style, seems to have written since Ronsard; there is no difference between him and us except what lies in a few words”. In fact, in the first part of the sixteenth century, the French language had not yet entered upon that healthy but violent crisis it was to



THE TRIUMPH OF TIME OVER FAME

From a miniature of the time of Louis XII, in a French translation  
of the *Triumphs* of Petrarch

undergo with Ronsard and his imitators. It was still French in vocabulary and syntax; it was clear and lively, and sufficed for a dainty expression of all ordinary sentiments.

It was the ensemble of these qualities—badinage, elegance, a piquant contrast between subject and form, the desire to please, not without some affectation, clarity of diction and accuracy of rhyme—which constituted the *style marotique*, imitated by La Fontaine and Voltaire. Marot, then, created a *style*, artificial enough, perhaps, and less a style than a manner; but this privilege is rare, and outside of him, belonged only to Petrarch and Marivaux.

### III. — MAROT'S CONTEMPORARIES.

Among the numerous poets who became celebrated during the first half of the sixteenth century, we shall first cite : **MARGUERITE D'ALENÇON**, or de **NAVARRE**, sister of François I, who is still famous for her tales, of which we shall speak later. Marguerite's poetic work is above all inspired by religious mysticism : *Le Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, *Le Triomphe de l'Agneau*, *L'Oraison de l'âme fidèle*. The collection published in 1547 under the title, *Les Marguerites de la Marguerite des Princesses*, contained profane pieces, epistles, *chansons*, mythological *fantaisies*. But a great number of the Queen of Navarre's poems remained unpublished, and have only appeared recently (1); and these testify to the depth and delicacy of her sentiments. It has long been said that she owed to Marot and Bonaventure des Périers the greater part of the verses which have come down to us under her name. In any event, she owes only to herself the sincerity of her mystical inspiration and the high moral value of her poetry.

Among lesser poets, we may mention here *Roger de Collerye* (1470-1536?), who created the type of Roger Bontemps; and *Victor Brodeau* (died 1540), whose name *Voiture* invokes to make a rhyme for his *rondeau* to *Isabeau*. Among more important poets was **MELLIN DE SAINT GELAIS** (1414-1558), son of Octavien de Saint-Gelais, who had himself written some agreeable verse. Mellin was the real disciple of Marot, and even more than Marot he was a court poet: he is thought to have been the chief subject of Joachim du Bellay's fine satire on the *Poète courtilan*. Mellin had great facility for rhyming, and could make any number of rhymes, almost impromptu, upon the most futile and unexpected subjects. It is possibly he who first brought the sonnet from Italy. At any rate, he was the first of the French *italianisants*, and the *Pléiade*, which scorned and fought him, merely imitated him by imitating Petrarch and the Italian poets.

**The School of Lyons.** — All the poets we have named, Marot included, had

(1) By M. A. LEFRANC, professor at the Collège de France (*Les Dernières poésies de Marguerite de Navarre*, Paris, 1896).



a very narrow conception of poetry. Marguerite, alone, sang of her religious aspirations and the anguish of her soul. Human love they reduced to mere gallantry, caprice and coquetry.

Neither was it passion, but intellectual love, *Platonism*, which animated *La Parfaite Amye* by **ANTOINE**

**HÉROËT**, Bishop of Digne (died 1568). This little poem, in three books, published in 1542, is an ingenious, subtle, sometimes obscure theory of ideal love: it is the *parfaite amy* who speaks, explaining her sentiments. "This book is interesting", says Émile Faguet, "because it marks the beginning of a literary and social fashion, which continued in the work of the *Pléiade*, and resulted in the *Précieuses*, the false *Précieuses*, the *Précieuses ridicules*, and Armande and Bélise; and also because it illustrates an attempt, often successful, to make verse the vehicle of even the most abstract and subtle thought." (1).

Héroët, without belonging officially to the Lyons School, was related to it by his doctrines and by the somewhat obscure style of his poetry. This School centred in an academy, *l'Angélique*, which held its meetings

on the hill of Fourvières, and its principal members were Maurice Scève, Claude de Taillemont, and several women, the most famous of whom was Louise Labbé, the "belle cordière". The city of Lyons at this epoch was a true capital, flourishing in commerce, and friendly to the arts, not unlike the Italian cities of the Renaissance; and with its poets, painters and printers it rivalled Paris. Above all, its own particular *genius* preserved an originality the traces of which have



PORTRAIT OF MELLIN DE SAINT-GELAIS  
From an anonymous print of the XVI century.

(1) ÉMILE FAGUET, *Hist. de la Litt. française*. Paris, Plon, 1900, t. I, p. 377.

grown more and more dim. It felt intensely the influence of Italy, and all who crossed the Alps, in either direction, stopped at Lyons. Poets and artists were received there with the greatest honour, as Marot was on his return from exile.



PORTRAIT OF LOUISE LABBÉ  
From the print of Jacques Voëriot.

### MAURICE SCÈVE

(1540-1552), belonged to a rich bourgeois family of Lyons, of Italian origin. He studied at Avignon, and discovered there the tomb of Petrarch's Laura de Noves. Petrarch, also, was the model he preferred, and his chief work, *Délie*, *objet de la plus haute vertu*, is an enthusiastic imitation of the *Canzoni*. Émile Faguet praised his melancholy affectation, and his voluntarily obscure symbolism. The contemporary school of symbolists claimed Maurice Scève, as the first romanticists did Ronsard; and *Délie* was acclaimed by many people who had neither understood it nor even perhaps read it.

### LOUISE LABBÉ (1526-

1566) was less symbolical as a poet than elegiac. She was very learned, and held

at Lyons a sort of literary salon. In her sonnets she sings of her own emotions with passion and melancholy. She is less artificial and affected than Héroet and Maurice Scève, but she also has less finesse and distinction.

Thus poetry, before the manifesto of the Pléiade (1549), had already some noble representatives. Neither Héroet, nor Scève, nor Louise Labbé were court rhymers or poets of current events. They had a high idea of their art, and appealed only to people of taste, of science and of subtle intelligence. It is well to

note this before beginning the history of the *Pléiade*. The latter, moreover, while disdaining Marot and Mellin de Saint-Gelais, esteemed the poets of the Lyons School; Ronsard and his friends divined in them precursors and rivals.

**THOMAS SIBILET'S "Art of Poetry".** — The school of Marot, as well as the great *rhétoriqueurs*, had its Art of Poetry. This was published by Thomas Sibilet in 1548, the year which preceded the *Défense et Illustration de la langue française*. This *Art poétique* placed the sonnet and the ode above the shorter pieces which du Bellay was to consider as *épiceries*, it led poets to imitate antiquity; it urged upon versifiers rules for the caesura and the alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes, and set aside *batelées* and *équivoquées* rhymes as old-fashioned. In short, it announced the imminent reform of poetic art.

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THE BOTTOM OF A LAMP  
 By Etienne Delaulne [1548 (?) - 1585 (?)].



DECORATIVE FRIEZE, BY ETIENNE DELAULNE [1518 (?) - 1585 (?) ]

## CHAPTER III.

### THE PLEIAD.

#### SUMMARY

1. In 1549 **JOACHIM DU BELLAY** published, in collaboration with Ronsard, *La Défense et Illustration de la langue française*, which contained the program of the new poetic school.

2. **RONSARD** (1524-1585) gathered around him, under the name of *La Pléiade*, his friends **du Bellay**, **Baïf**, **Jodelle**, **Belleau**, **Pontus de Thyard**, and **Daurat**, their master.—He composed *Odes*, *Amours*, *Élégies*, *Discours*, *La Franciade*. His bias was classic, in his love for the ancients, his impersonality, his theories of the different genres, etc. He was romantic in his feeling for nature, his melancholy, his apprehension of the epic. He enjoyed wide renown during his life, was unknown in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and was revived by the romanticists.

3. **OF THE DISCIPLES OF RONSARD**: **J. DU BELLAY** wrote *l'Olive*, *Les Regrets*, *Les Antiquités de Rome*. He is remarkable for sincerity and tenderness. — **RÉMY BELLEAU** wrote some graceful *Bergeries*; — **BAÏF** wished to launch a new system of versification, etc. (See **Jodelle**, in the chapter on the Theatre).

4. **FOLLOWERS OF THE PLÉIADE**: **DU BARTAS** drew his inspiration from the Bible in his *La Semaine ou la Création*; **AGRIPPA D'AUBIGNÉ** wrote a vigorous pamphlet, *Les Tragiques*, and an epic; **OLIVIER DE MAGNY** also belonged to this group, etc.





DECORATED LETTER  
used by Chr. Plantin.

From the beginning of the sixteenth century, French poetry continued its normal evolution, each of its stages being necessary to its progress. The *grands rhétoriciens* had subjected versification to healthful gymnastics, for, under their childish exaggerations, we feel their care for rhythm and rhyme. To their plays upon words, Marot succeeded with a simpler poetry, whose ease and elegance, though it proved that the preceding exercises had not been without their use, was still somewhat lacking in inspiration. The school of Lyons, less learned though more obscure, restored thought to poetry, demanding that verse should express ideas or passion.

When Ronsard and his friends undertook a *reform*, therefore, their task was already prepared; they profited by the entire previous movement in art and thought. The date of their *manifesto*, 1549, is useful to remember, but it does not mark either a discovery or a sudden change of method, indicating simply a stage of maturity, and the organisation of a young school determined to produce immediate results from an evolutionary change which had been maturing for more than fifty years.

## I. — THE MANIFESTO OF THE PLÉIADE (1549).

*La Défense et l'illustration de la langue française*, by Joachim du Bellay, is composed, as its title indicates, of two parts, *défense* and *illustration*. The author defends the French language against those who regard it as incapable of rivalling the ancient tongues; he recalls that the Latins, also, at first scorned their national idiom, considering Greek as superior; and that it was in reacting against this prejudice that Cicero succeeded in creating literary Latin, capable of complete expression. So, it must not be forgotten that the first work they meant to do was to *rehabilitate the French language*. Was this necessary, and had not French writers already produced a great number of good and substantial works? It is evident that du Bellay thought only of the poetry of his time, and particularly that of Marot's successors. He resented the custom of using French only for *ballades*, *rondeaux* and other frivolous verse, while the more lofty ideas were expressed in Latin. He noted that the French language was poor, but that it could be enriched and ennobled and made brilliant by translation, by imitation, by work, and by the introduction of the greater branches of ancient literature into French. Such is, in a few lines, a summing up of a youthful work, full of enthusiasm rather than criticism, and in which the reader must not expect to find either a consecutive plan or absolute logic (1).

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 152.

**Theories of the *Pléiade*.** — In completing the ideas contained in the *manifesto* by those which Ronsard and du Bellay added later (4), we may set forth this poetic reform as a whole :

1. The *Pléiade* insists that the poet shall make use of pure French language. Ronsard is as explicit upon this point as du Bellay, and says in his Preface to *La Franciade*: " Use purely French words "; and d'Aubigné, in his Preface to his *Tragiques*, recalls these words of Ronsard: " I counsel you, as my last testament, never to allow these old expressions to be lost, that you use them and defend them boldly against those knaves who regard nothing as elegant except Latinized or Italianate French..."

2. But the French language (the language of poetry being understood), had need of being enriched and fortified; for poetry must have its language distinct from that of prose. Following are the processes practised and recommended by the *Pléiade*: a) " I advise, you," said Ronsard in his Preface to *La Franciade*, " to make use indifferently of all the *dialects*; " and " I warn you not to hesitate to restore to use all the *old words*. " So, far from limiting themselves to Parisian French, or court French, they were to borrow from *picard*, *gascon*, *poitevin*, *normand*, even *wallon*, and restore archaic words taken from old French;

b) Again, Ronsard said, in his *Abrégé d'art poétique*, " You should often frequent the company of artisans in all the callings, such as men engaged in seafaring, the chase, falconry, and especially iron workers, gold and silversmiths, founders, black smiths, workers in metals, and draw from them many beautiful and vivid comparisons, using the very vocabulary of the callings to enrich your work, and make it more agreeable and perfect..."

c) " I should like to encourage you to invent wisely and boldly *new words*, provided they be moulded and fashioned after a pattern already accepted by the people " (preface to *La Franciade*). We should note here four kinds of new words: compound words composed of two French words (a verb and its direct complement, two adjectives or substantives juxtaposed, an adjective or participle preceded by an adverb). These are the three types: *donne-blé*, *doux-amer*, *mal-rassis*;—Verbs or adjectives formed by *layering*, adding a termination to an adjective or to a substantive: *blond*, *blondoyer*; *source*, *sourcer*; *argent*, *argenteux*;—*marbre*, *marbrin*; *songe*, *songeard*;—*Diminutives* of adjectives or substantives: *âmelette* (*dme*); *doucelette* (*douce*); *verdelet* (*vert*), etc.;—Words, especially epithets, drawn from Greek, (*Lénéan*, *Cronien*), and substantives (*idole*, *sympathie*), and from Latin (*blandice*, *perennel*).

As to Ronsard's own vocabulary, he may be said to have been very discreet. We find in his work a dozen words traced over the Greek, ten upon Latin models, about thirty taken from old French, seven borrowed from dialects, about thirty from the trades, the same number of verbs drawn by *layering* from substant-

(1) Ronsard, in his *Abrégé d'art poétique* (1565), and the two Prefaces of *La Franciade* (1572-1574); du Bellay in the Preface to *Olive* (1551).

ives, some sixty adjectives of the same kind ; and of French compound words there are about a hundred (1).

3. Syntax was to be made poetic by the following means : a) by *inversion*, in imitation of ancient tongues. Old French, a language with two cases, had extensively and usefully employed inversion. In the work of Ronsard, it often became forced and obscure ;

b) The use of *infinitives as nouns*, after the Greek manner (*le chanter, le vivre*) ;

c) *Adjectives used as nouns* (*le liquide des eaux, le frays des ombres*) ;

d) The *adjective* used in place of the *adverb* (*ils combattent obstinés, for obstinément*) : a sort of hypallage.

4. The *Pléiade* also refreshed poetry by the introduction of the *grands genres*, imitated from the ancients : the *ode*, the *epic*, *tragedy*, *comedy*, *satire*, the *epistle* ; and from the Italians, the *sonnet*. It was a happy and a necessary reaction against the short forms in which poets imprisoned themselves in the fourteenth, fifteenth and during the first half of the sixteenth centuries. It is objected, and with some reason, that the mistake of the *Pléiade* consisted in having imported into France ancient genres, with their rules and conventions, instead of restoring the great French genres : the *ode*, which had formed part of thirteenth century lyricism, in the North and the South, under the names of *chansons* or *sirvente* ; the *chanson de geste* ; the *miracle-play* (which contained all the elements of the drama) ; the *coq-à-l'âne* (true satire). Without discussing this opinion, we must admit two points : first, that none of these genres was at that time alive in any form truly literary ; and second, that compared to these outworn forms, old-fashioned and disqualified at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the great Greek and Latin genres had, especially in the opinion of educated young men, a singular prestige (2).

5. The *Pléiade* also borrowed mythology from antiquity, which, without being entirely substituted for allegory, remained in use in classic poetry until Chateaubriand.

6. Finally, the *Pléiade* invented or renewed all the lyrical rhythms. Classicalists and romanticists would only have to imitate Ronsard and his disciples (3).

## II. — RONSARD (1524-1585).

**Biography.** — Ronsard was well-born (like Joachim du Bellay, Antoine de Baif, and nearly all his disciples and imitators), and this detail has its importance ; for the independence, dignity, boldness and influence of the poet are derived from his social position. The Ronsard family, of Hungarian origin, is said to have

(1) See the étude at the beginning of the *Lexique de Ronsard*, by L. MELLERIO (Plon, 1895).

(2) As regards the genres, compare FAGUET'S *Seizième siècle*, p. 217 ; F. BRUNETIERE'S, *Evolution des genres*, p. 35.

(3) Regarding rhythms, cf. FAGUET, *id.*, p. 271.

settled in France in the fourteenth century. Pierre de Ronsard was born on September 11, 1524, in the château of the Poissonnière, near Vendôme, in a charming valley watered by the Loir. After a too hasty course in the college of Navarre, young Ronsard, destined for court life, followed his father to the camp of François I at Avignon, and became page to the Dauphin. The latter dying suddenly, Ronsard passed into the service of the Duke d'Orléans (later Henri II), then into that of James V of Scotland, whom he followed to his own country. He came back to France in 1540, returned again to Scotland and England, entered the household of the Duke d'Orléans, was a member of several embassies to Germany and Italy; and, in short, was, at eighteen years of age, a young gentleman actively engaged in diplomatic life and court fêtes. Cardinal du Perron said, in his funeral discourse: "Those who knew him in his first flowering say that nature never formed a body better fashioned and proportioned than his, both in his deportment and his very agreeable features and in his figure and stature, which were extremely august and martial." And his biographer, Claude Binet, draws a very attractive portrait of him, adding: "Having been reared with the King (Henri II), being of nearly the same age, he began to be highly esteemed by the latter, and indeed in all the king's exercises for developing and strengthening the body, whether wrestling, football, or other matters, Ronsard was always summoned to his side." This was an important period of a life which was soon to be consecrated to solitude and study; the impressions Ronsard received from nature, from his journeys, and from the court were stored in his memory; and from these ever-living roots constantly sprang unexpected offshoots to enrich his work.

Becoming deaf, Ronsard, who had never ceased to love reading, and who began writing verse at the age of twelve, did not immediately renounce his functions in the train of the king, but profited by his leisure time to study with his friend Antoine de Baïf, whose tutor was then Daurat (1). The young Baïf was the son of Lazare de Baïf, one of the most distinguished men of his time, and who has himself left a name in letters (2). We may judge of the intellectual activity of the milieu frequented by Ronsard from the fact that, already knowing English, German and Italian, he began to study ardently Latin and Greek. Also, when Daurat was made Principal of the college of Coqueret, Ronsard and Baïf installed themselves in his house, with Muret, Turnèbe, Jodelle, Rémi Belleau, and Pontus de Thyard. We learn from Claude Binet of the enthusiastic industry of these young men; "We cannot forget with what intensity of will and ambition these two future ornaments of France (Ronsard and Baïf) gave themselves to study; for Ronsard, brought up at court and accustomed to be up at late hours, continued to study until two or three hours after midnight, and on going to bed

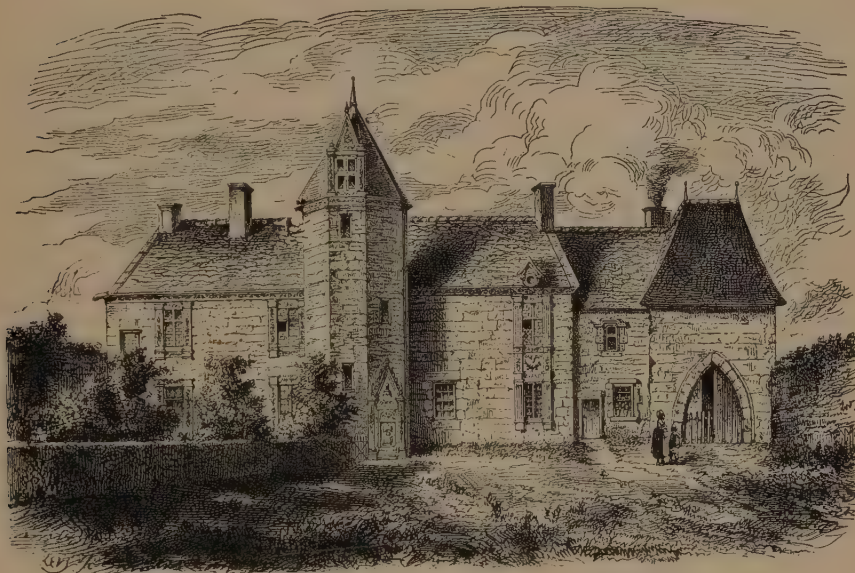
(1) Regarding *Daurat* or *Dorat*, see p. 211.

(2) *Lazare de Baïf*, see p. 255.



awakened Baïf, who rose, took the candle and did not let Ronsard's place grow cold. "

For seven years, Ronsard translated and commented Latin authors, but especially those of Greece. Meanwhile, the young Joachim du Bellay, having met Ronsard in a hotel in Poitou, came to join him at the college of Coqueret in 1548. In 1549 the *Brigade* was constituted, having for members Ronsard, du Bellay, Baïf, Jodelle, Rémi Belleau, Pontus de Thyard and Daurat. " Once



VIEW OF THE POISSONNIÈRE, PATERNAL MANOR OF THE RONSARDS  
Façade of the inner court before the Restoration.

masters of the ground, " says Nisard, " victory went to their heads, and the Brigade, placing themselves in the heavens, took the name of *La Pléiade* (1) ".

We shall give farther on a chronology of the works of Ronsard, simply recalling here the chief connections between these works and the events of his life. These events, however, were of slight importance, and after 1550, the year in which he published his first four books of odes, his biography lies, so to speak, entirely in his works. He divided his time between court and the country.

(1) NISARD, *Histoire de la Littérature française*, t. I, p. 351 — The *Pleiad* is a constellation composed of seven stars. At Alexandria, under Ptolemy Philadelphus, the seven most illustrious poets were known as the *Pleiad*: among them were Theocritus, Apollonius of Rhodes, Lycophron, Callimachus. The scholars who were clustered around Charlemagne were also called the Pleiad.

Successively in favour with Henri II, Charles IX and Henri III (but especially with Charles), patronised, or rather admired and sought after by all the most illustrious personages of his time—particularly by Marguerite, daughter of François I, Duchess of Savoie, Michel de l'Hospital, the Duke d'Orléans, the Duke d'Anjou, Catherine de Médicis, Marie Stuart, etc.—Ronsard was overwhelmed with gifts, pensions and benefices. He was titular of the Abbey of Bellozane, of the Abbey of Croix-Val and of the Priory of Saint-Cosme-en-l'Isle.

We know from Ronsard himself, and through his biographer, Binet, that he loved the country. Not only did he live the greater part of the time at Saint-Cosme or Croix-Val, but during his sojourns at court "he took delight", says Binet, "in visiting Meudon as much for its wood as for the agreeable view of the river Seine, or Gentilly, Hercueil (Arcueil), Saint-Cloud and Vanves, for the pleasant freshness of the brook of Bièvre... He also felt a particular pleasure in gardening..." He was passionately fond of hunting, and of *music* and all the arts. To sum up, this rather *bookish* poet, whose erudition was a disadvantage, grew pale over his texts only during the seven years at Coqueret. He still led a studious life, doubtless, but one open to the influence of society and the impressions made by nature.

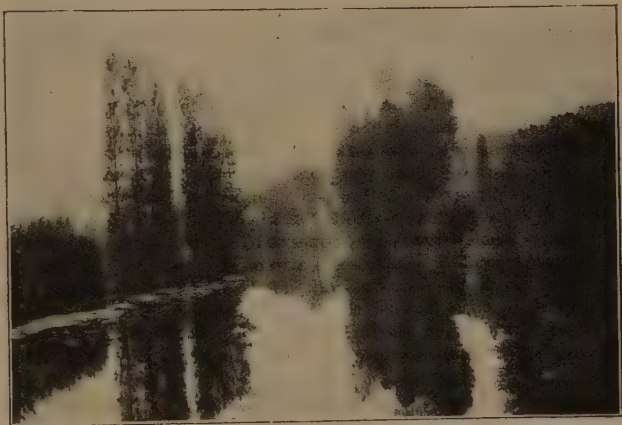
Although proud and sensitive, Ronsard was nevertheless, between 1560 and 1574, a true court poet. If indeed, during this period, he had moments of patriotic eloquence, spoke out to his king and to the French people, defended himself with noble indignation against the attacks of his enemies, yet he was always willing to write poetry for special occasions for Charles IX which did not always reflect honour upon his character. He frequented the court less under Henri III. He suffered from gout, and became morose. His pensions were but irregularly paid, and evidently his aging glory had begun to pall: he should have died younger, like Corneille. He lived generally at Croix-Val, near the Forest of Gastine and the fountain of Bellerie. When he journeyed to Paris, instead of stopping at the Louvre, where Charles IX had an apartment assigned to him, he lodged with his friend Galland, principal of the college of Boncour.

Here he stayed for the last time at the beginning of 1585, whence he had himself taken to Croix-Val and from there to Saint-Cosme-en-l'Isle. "This Priory", says du Perron, "is situated in a very pleasant country, by the river Loire, with groves, meadows and all the natural ornaments which embellish Touraine, of which it is the gem and delight... Ronsard, having no further desires except to be carried here, in order to enjoy the final happiness of dying at the Priory, had himself placed in his carriage, all crippled and helpless as I have described to you, and being transported thus, in spite of the harm the air caused him... finally arrived at Saint-Cosme about five o'clock in the evening." There he died on the 27th or 29th of December, 1585.

His death was the occasion for a sort of public mourning. He had asked to be interred in the choir of the Church of Saint-Cosme-en-l'Isle; but in February,

1586, there was celebrated in the chapel of the college of Boncour a solemn service in which Cardinal du Perron pronounced Ronsard's funeral oration.

**Ronsard's Work.** — The chief works of Ronsard, in chronological order, are: The *Odes* (the first four books in 1550, the fifth in 1553.) We should note (Book I) about fifteen *Pindaric* odes, divided, like those of Pindar, into strophes, antistrophes and epodes, among others: *Au roy Henri II sur la paix faite entre lui et le roy d'Angleterre, l'an 1550*; the ode *A Michel de l'Hospital*; *Sur la victoire de François de Bourbon, comte d'Anguien, à Cérizoles*. But, there are pieces more easily read, in the first book of the odes, and others, and which are in Ronsard's graceful manner: *A Cassandre (Mignon, allons voir si la rose (1)...* This piece was added in 1553); *A sa lyre* (containing a fine and proud definition of poetic genius). — In Book II we find other pedantic odes, such as *A Calliope* (2) and familiar odes, sometimes gallant, or descriptive or Anacreontic: *A la fontaine Bellerie* (3); *A la forest de Gastine, l'Amour mouillé*. — Book III contains historical odes: *A Monseigneur d'Angoulesme*; *A Mesdames, filles du roi Henri II*; or familiar odes in the tone of the epistle: *A Charles de Pisseleu*; *A Odet de Coligny*. — Book IV contains some of Ronsard's masterpieces: *De l'élection de son sépulchre*; several poems quite personal, on nature and the flight of time (4); *l'Amour voleur de miel* (Anacreon); *l'Aubespain*; *les Roses*. — In Book V there are chiefly short odes on gallant subjects. Under the title of *Odes retranchées* (suppressed by Ronsard in his last edition and reprinted in the edition of 1609), we find: *Le Rossignol*; *A la source du Loir*; *A l'aloëtie*.



THE SHORES OF THE LOIR, NOT FAR FROM LA POISSONNIÈRE

*Les Amours de Cassandre* (1552), commented by Muret, Professor at the Collège d France. This book includes 234 pieces, of which 225 are sonnets. This *Cassandre*, whom he met, we are told, when he was twenty-one, during a journey to Blois, was not what Boileau called an "Iris in the air". She was the daughter of Bernard Salviati, an illustrious Florentine nobleman, who settled in France during the first years of the sixteenth century. Cassandre Salviati married Jean de Peigney, lord of Pray; her daughter married a Guillaume de Musset, who was a direct ancestor of Alfred de Musset (5). This identifi-

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 72.

(2) — — — 2nd cycle, p. 141.

(3) — — — 1st cycle, p. 73.

(4) — — — 2nd cycle, p. 144.

(5) As to the Cassandre of Ronsard, cf. *Revue des questions historiques*, janvier 1902, an article by M. Henri Longnon.

ation of Ronsard's *Cassandre* enables us to appreciate justly the descriptions, portraits, analysis of sentiments, and regrets contained in the first book of *Amours*, in which the imitation of Petrarch, Bembo, Ariosto, etc., is at times so artificial.

In 1553, *Les Gaietés* and *Les Épigrammes*, imitated from the ancients. Among these appeared *l'Alouette*.

In 1554, *Le Bocage royal*, comprising 26 pieces, several of which are addressed to the future Henri III, others to Catherine de Médicis; these are at times fine political poetry.

In 1556, *Les Amours de Marie*, commented by Rémi Belleau. Marie Dupin was a young girl of Anjou, whom Ronsard met at Bourgueil, where, according to Binet, he often went for the hunting: for this reason he calls her *le pin de Bourgueil*. In this collection of 116 pieces are some of the poet's finest sonnets, especially that one *Sur la mort de Marie* (1).

In the same year (1556) appeared *Les Hymnes*, to the number of 23. Among these are some very original poems, by their inspiration (as in the *hymne de l'or* (2), *hymne de la mort*), by their imagery, or by their personal accent (as in the *hymne de l'automne*, which is a sort of poetic biography of Ronsard).

In 1560, Ronsard, become court poet, published *Les Mascarades, Combats et Cartels*, poems of occasion, numbering 28. These are among his least effective work.

In the same year (1560), *Les Élégies* contained, on the contrary, some admirable pieces, in which the poet expresses sometimes his troubled love for a certain Genève, sometimes his impressions of nature (*Contre les bûcherons de la forest de Gastine* (3)). In an *élégie* to Rémi Belleau he tells the history of his family and describes his youth.

Some of the *Eglogues* also appeared in 1560, and in these we again find the displeasing court poet, making dialogues between personages at court dressed as shepherds and bearing rustic names: *Orléantin* (Duke d'Orléans); *Angelot* (Duke d'Anjou); *Navarrin* (King of Navarre, future Henri IV); *Guisin* (Duke de Guise); *Margot* (the Duchess de Savoie, Marguerite); *Carlin* (Charles IX). Notwithstanding these rather childish conventions, the *Eglogues* still deserve to be read because of certain fine descriptive and impassioned verses.

From 1560-1564 *Les Discours* appeared, in which Ronsard revealed himself as a great satirical, political and patriotic poet. The chief are: *Le Discours sur les misères de ce temps, à la reine-mère, Catherine de Médicis* (4); *La Continuation du discours des misères du temps; l'Institution pour l'adolescence du roy très chrestien Charles IX du nom* (5); *Les Remontrances au peuple de France; Réponse de Pierre de Ronsard aux injures et calomnies de je ne sais quels prédicantereaux et ministreaux de Genève* (against Florent Chrétien and Jacques Grévin.) (6).

In 1572, Ronsard published four cantos of *La Franciade*, an epic poem designed to contain 24 cantos, the arguments of which, written by Amadis Jamyn from Ronsard's indications, have been preserved. But he never progressed with this work. The death of Charles IX, for whom he rhymed these adventures of Francus, broke his courage; and indeed he would have required much to write twenty cantos more in the same tone. The subject is well-known: Francus, son of Hector, comes with a colony of Trojans to found the French monarchy (7). In Canto I, the gods decide that the son of Hector, brought up *incognito* in Epirus by his mother Andromache and his uncle Helenus, shall set out for Gaul. Mercury comes to inform Helenus, and a fleet is got ready.—In Canto II, the fleet is at sea. Neptune and Juno prepare to destroy it. There is a tempest, and

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 145.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 75.

(3) — — 2nd cycle, p. 146.

(4) — — 2nd cycle, p. 149.

(5) — — 2nd cycle, p. 150.

(6) — — 1st cycle, p. 77.

(7) Cf. p. 60.



only six vessels arrive in Provence. The king of the country, Dicée, meets the shipwrecked men and offers them hospitality. He has two daughters, Hyante and Clymène, who both fall in love with Francus. The latter defies a giant who had carried off Dicée's son; he kills the giant and rescues the young Orée.—In Canto III, Dicée offers his daughter Hyante in marriage; but Clymène continues to love him and sends him a letter declaring her passion; Francus disdains her, and she throws herself into the sea.—In Canto IV, Hyante, who can read the future, unveils his destiny to Francus, and shows him the Frankish kings who shall succeed him; the poem stops with Charles Martel.—In



PORTRAITS OF RONSARD AND CASSANDRE SALVIATI

*From the prints on wood given in the edition des Amours de 1553.*

This portrait of Ronsard, at 27 years old, may not be exact, as for that of Cassandre, it is unquestionably all convention.

*La Franciade* Ronsard did not employ the alexandrine, which he handled so boldly in the *discours*, but decasyllabic verse.

Finally, in 1574 appeared the *Sonnets pour Hélène* (although several pieces had been published earlier), and these form in Ronsard's last edition the third of the book *Amours*. These sonnets are addressed to Hélène de Surgères, Maid of Honour to Catherine de Médicis. One of them appears in all the anthologies: *Quand vous serez bien vieille* (1)...

During the last ten years of his life, Ronsard still wrote a few verses, but chiefly occupied himself in incessantly rereading and retouching his preceding works, of which he

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 138

published a folio edition in 1584. In 1586, a year after the poet's death, a posthumous edition appeared, different from the preceding one. And in 1609 a certain number of pieces, suppressed by Ronsard in 1584, were restored to his text—Ronsard's changes and shortening are sometimes unfortunate, and he has spoiled or weakened some fine poems. The task of his editors is therefore difficult because they cannot always be sure of Ronsard's final text (1).

**Ronsard's Four Periods.** — From this survey of his works we may see that Ronsard's development is easy to follow. With Emile Faguet, we observe four periods :—From 1550 to 1553, Ronsard, fresh from his intensive study, continued an exaggerated disciple of the ancients and of Petrarch. He was "fervid, even to lack of taste". His "Pindaric" odes, which again compromise him in the opinion of posterity, and which explain and justify the pitiless verdict of Boileau, were sins of youth. So, later, Corneille was to write his *Cilindre*, and Musset his *Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie*.—From 1553-1560, Ronsard no longer imitated Pindar. He felt, perhaps unconsciously, that this grand lyricism was out of place at a time when Italian influence, joined to French good sense, was imposing elegance and moderation. So he turned to Anacreon, of whose work Henri Estienne published a first edition in 1554 (2). He also drew inspiration from Horace, Catulus and Jean Second, author of the *Oscula* (in Latin), while preserving his cult for Petrarch and in general for the Italians.—From 1560 to 1574, Ronsard's work is confused and contradictory. On one hand, he made rhymes for the court (this was the period of his greatest favour), often paltry pieces which made him appear as the successor of Marot and Mellin de Saint-Gelais ; on the other hand, he wrote his admirable *Discours*, which anticipate Victor Hugo's *Châtiments*. Finally, though no longer imitating Pindar, he began to imitate Homer, and wrote *La Franciade*.—From 1574 to his death in 1585, Ronsard became once more an elegiac poet, a lyrical poet more personal and more modern (*Sonnets pour Hélène*).

**Ronsard's Defects.** — In reading Ronsard, we must admit, once for all, that he has certain faults, and not pass our time, unless we are professional critics, in "losing enjoyment in a search for reasons." For instance, Ronsard is *pedantic* in the sense that he plays off, on every occasion and in a manner the most unexpected and displeasing, his implacable erudition. Without speaking of his Pindaric odes, nor of *La Franciade*, his most celebrated and popular sonnets and elegies are spoiled by certain mythological details. Read the sonnet to *Hélène*: *Quand vous serez bien vieille...* and you find *ombres myrteux*, which

(1) See, with regard to this question, *l'Histoire de la littérature classique* by F. BRUNETIÈRE, Paris (1905), p. 327.

(2) Under the name of *Anacréon* Henri Estienne published fifty-five anacreontic odes, the most famous of which are *La Colombe*, *l'Amour mouillé*, *l'Amour piqué par une abeille*, etc., which were not the work of Anacreon, of whose odes we possess only a few fragments, but of a more impassioned tone and a style less weak. (Cf. SAINTE-BEUVE, an article on *Anacréon au seizième siècle*, following the *Tableau*.)

incites commentary ; in the elegy *Contre les bûcherons de la forest de Gastine*, in the midst of descriptive verses of admirable simplicity, appear *Nymphs, Satyrs, Écho...* ; in the ode on *L'Élection de son sépulchre*, we find the young shepherds speaking of the *Sœurs compagnes* (the Muses) and of *Pan*, and Ronsard himself adds *Alcée, Sappho...* Ronsard wrote for the elite among humanists, and was himself saturated with antiquity and mythology. In reading him, therefore, we must always be prepared for these attacks of pedantry.

To this first cause of obscurity (which is more and more serious in proportion as the reader is less a humanist) was added another. Ronsard was not only a scholar, he was an *Italianisant*. The greater part of the sonnets in which he analyses the *nuances* of his love are full of reminiscences of Petrarch. The manner in which he associates nature with his emotions is subtle, often allegorical or symbolical. For a society civilised à l'*Italienne* this was less a fault than a merit ; but for us, after three centuries of French logic and clarity, it is both annoying and fatiguing.

To these subjective faults, is it proper to add certain exaggerations of form ? Truly, we accustom ourselves very quickly, in reading Ronsard, to a few surprises in vocabulary or syntax. Compound words, diminutives, infinitives used as substantives, neologisms too soon become archaisms, forced inversions—these are not of great importance (1). It is a mistake to blame the language or grammar of Ronsard for the disfavour into which he fell. Villon must have been more difficult to read in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, yet he never ceased to be read. But Villon's thought is clear, his sentiments simple ; his work speaks *directly* to the mind or heart. But with Ronsard it is continually necessary to *transpose* ; the allusion must be divined, the symbol translated—a very painful task for the contemporaries of Malherbe, Boileau or Voltaire.

**Why Ronsard is "Classic."** — Ronsard, disdained by Malherbe and Boileau, is however in certain respects the first in date of French classics :

a) By his cult for and imitation of the ancients ; from Ronsard down to Chateaubriand French poetry sought its subjects, its marvellous and its imagery in the works of the Greeks and Latins ;

b) By the *impersonality*, or the very indirect personality of most of his pieces, in which we do not find, generally, the manner of feeling which is particular to an individual, but an analysis of love such as conceived by all his contemporaries and by the Italians, his models ;

c) By his theory of the *genres*, distinct and fixed, having their own laws and conventions ;

(1) In the vocabulary of the *Pléiade*, there are hardly more than two hundred new words. Cf. *Lexique de la langue de Ronsard*, by MELLERIO (*Bibl. élzévirienne*), with Preface by PETIT DE JULLEVILLE.

d) By his usual style, which is oratorical and didactic, following the order of reason rather than the heart ;

e) By his elevated conception of the life of the poet, a theory which he belied a little, but which subsists and was developed in the seventeenth century by Boileau in the first and fourth cantos of his *Art poétique* (1).

**Ronsard as a Romanticist.** — Nevertheless, the romanticists of 1827 were not altogether wrong in claiming Ronsard, who in certain respects is related to them :

a) By his manner of associating nature with man's sentiments, particularly melancholy, the flight of time, death. Some of his pieces are, in this regard, *lamartiniennes*, and this is not surprising to those who know that Lamartine was inspired by the same model as Ronsard, namely, Petrarch (2) ;

b) By melancholy itself, which, connected with the idea of death as well as of pleasure, gives to many of Ronsard's passages an unhealthy and disturbing charm in which there is nothing classical ;

c) By an understanding of the epic, which does not appear however in *La Franciade*, but in some of the poems such as *L'Équité des vieux Gaulois*, in some hymns and in the *discours* ; Ronsard is then the precursor of Victor Hugo as an epic poet ;

d) Finally by the fullness, variety, colour and even the obscurities of his language and his syntax ; he felt himself inspired and obeyed his inspiration, neither choosing nor striking out : this is romanticism.

**Ronsard's Fame.** — During his lifetime, as we have seen, Ronsard enjoyed worldwide celebrity. Henri II, Charles IX, Catherine de Médicis, Marie Stuart, loaded him with benefits ; all the French poets considered him as their master ; the Italian poet Tasso came to Paris to visit him, and submitted to him two cantos of his *Jerusalem Delivered*.

But after Ronsard's death, his fame diminished. It did not end suddenly, as even in 1630 he was imitated and defended by illustrious disciples such as du Bartas, Vauquelin de la Fresnaye, Agrippa d'Aubigné, Mathurin Régnier, Théophile de Viau, etc. But Malherbe, in the presence of his own disciples, struck out every line in a copy of Ronsard's Poems ; and when Boileau, in his *Art poétique* passed so severe a judgment upon the author of the *Pindaric odes* and of *La Franciade*, Ronsard's work had already been forgotten. His rehabilitation began only in the nineteenth century. Pierre Lebrun read him with enthusiasm in 1808. In 1827, Sainte-Beuve, in his *Tableau de la poésie française au seizième*

(1) See especially, in Becq de Fouquières' collection, p. 473, *La Réponse de Ronsard aux Ministres de Genève...* ; A Pierre l'Escot, p. 323, etc.

(2) Cf. *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 144, one of Ronsard's most remarkable pieces, the last stanza of which has a marvellous rhythm, resembling musically the end of the *Golfe de Baia*, by LAMARTINE.





PORTRAIT OF RONSARD, AT THE END OF HIS LIFE  
From the print of Léonard Gautier (1561, † vers 1630).

*siècle*, represented Ronsard as an ancestor of the young romantic school; and ever since this somewhat disputable attempt—made however by the most penetrating and precise criticism—Ronsard has resumed his rank among the great French poets.

### III. — THE DISCIPLES OF RONSARD.

#### 1. The Pleiad.

**JOACHIM DU BELLAY** (1525-1560). — Born at Liré, near Angers, he be-



PORTRAIT OF JOACHIM DU BELLAY

From an original sketch of the XVI century.

longed to the distinguished family which produced, in the sixteenth century, Guillaume du Bellay, lord of Langey, ambassador to Italy, Germany and England under François I, author of the *Mémoires* published in 1569; Martin du Bellay, his brother, also the author of *Mémoires*; and Cardinal Jean du Bellay, ambassador, accomplished humanist, and one of the *patrons* of the *Collège de France*. He was, therefore, like Ronsard, a genuine nobleman, and like him destined at first for diplomacy or the army. He was studying law at Poitiers when, in 1548, he first met Ronsard. That same day determined his poetic vocation. Deaf and without health, he turned with ardour to the study of the ancients and especially the Italians. It was he who published in 1549 the manifesto of the new school, *La Défense et Illustration de la langue française*, and previous to Ronsard, who resented it, he published his first collection of verse, *Olive*, in 1550. Bellay had not renounced, however, his diplomatic career, and in

1551 he accompanied his uncle, the Cardinal, to Rome as secretary. There, humiliated by his inferior situation, he composed his *Regrets*, and then his *Antiquités de Rome* and his *Jeux rustiques*, though he did not publish these works until after his return to France in 1558. Becoming entirely deaf, and more and more ill, he died suddenly at the age of thirty-five.

Besides his *Défense* in prose, Joachim du Bellay published;—*Olive*, a collection of sonnets dedicated to Mademoiselle de Viole (of whose name *Olive* is the anagram), and which is *Petrarchism*, often very affected, and often also pleasing or

lofty (1); *Regrets*, another collection of sonnets written in Rome, in which melancholy, irony and satire predominate, the poet being divided between the longing for his native land, and a noble indignation against the manners and morals of the Roman court (2);—*Les Antiquités de Rome*, sonnets characterised by the same sentiments as the foregoing, but possessing a gravity and elevation of tone which connect du Bellay with the great French romanticists (3). Du Bellay also wrote *Divers Jeux rustiques*, a group of short pieces often attractive by their simplicity, but frequently far-fetched and affected (4). Finally, he produced one of the finest of satires, *Le Poète courtois*, in a style followed later by Mathurin Régnier and Boileau (5).

Du Bellay has neither the variety nor power of Ronsard, but he often seems more sincere in the expression of his emotions, he is less pedantic in his imitation of the ancients, and his language is less unequal. He is a true ancestor of the romanticists, by his pessimism, his melancholy and his quite personal poetry.

**RÉMY BELLEAU** (1528-1577) was born at Nogent-le-Rotrou. He was tutor and governor to the son of the Marquis d'Elbeuf, and followed that family to Italy.

Returning to France in 1557, he first published a collection of poems entitled *Petites Inventions*, very short pieces in which he describes various objects, animals, fruits, etc., with accuracy. He then published a translation of Ana-



PORTRAIT OF RÉMY BELLEAU

From an anonymous print of the xvi century.

- |     |                           |   |
|-----|---------------------------|---|
| (1) | <i>Morceaux choisis</i> , | 1st cycle, p. 81.                               |
| (2) | —                         | 1st cycle, pp. 82, 83; 2nd cycle, pp. 160, 161. |
| (3) | —                         | 1st cycle, p. 82; 2nd cycle, p. 158.            |
| (4) | —                         | 1st cycle, p. 80.                               |
| (5) | —                         | 2nd cycle, p. 161.                              |

creon (1), and afterwards the first part of his *Bergeries*, which he was to continue in 1572, and in which he imitated the Italian Sannazar, author of *Arcadia*. The background of these *Bergeries* is a prose dialogue between conventional shepherds, in which are inserted numerous poems showing a vivid and intimate love of nature. Of these, the little poems on *Mai* and *Avril* (2) have been widely quoted.

Belleau's other work, *Amours et nouveaux échanges des pierres précieuses, vertus et propriétés d'icelles* (1576), is less known. For this he borrowed from the Greek anthology and the *Lapidaires* of the Middle Ages. In form it is ingenious, varied and at times brilliant (3). In some of these pieces, Rémy Belleau may be compared to Théophile Gautier, author of *Émaux et Camées*.

We shall revert to Belleau in our chapter on the *Drama*, as the author of a comedy, *La Reconnue*.

**ANTOINE DE BAIF** (1532-1590), also belonged to one of the most illustrious families of the sixteenth century. We have already seen, in Ronsard's biography, how ardently Baif worked at the college of Coqueret; he became very learned, and abused the use, even more than Ronsard, of his knowledge of the ancients.

He wrote much; but none of his works is of the first order. He published *Les Amours* (1552 and 1558); *Les Météores*, for which he at times successfully drew inspiration from Virgil's *Georgics* (1567); *Le Passe-Temps* (1573), which contains a few graceful short poems; *Les Mimes, enseignements et proverbes* (1584), which is his best work (4).

Baif introduced into French versification a new system, similar to that of the ancients, basing the rhythm, not on the number of syllables, but on the disposal of *short* and *long* syllables.—He also invented a *phonetic* orthography.—But he must not be held responsible for the introduction into French of comparatives in *ieur* and superlatives in *ime*, according to a misunderstood epigram by Joachim du Bellay: this innovation was due to Pelletier in his *Art poétique* (1555) (5).

Baif will appear again in our chapter upon the *Drama*, with his uncle Lazare de Baif.—There we shall also treat of *Jodelle*, who was one of the Pleiad.

**PONTUS DE THYARD** (1511-1603) had published his *Erreurs amoureuses* before the manifesto of the Pleiad, to which he then rallied. He drew his style and inspiration from the Lyons school.

(1) Anacreon had just been published in France by Henri Estienne (1554).

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 165.

(3) — — 2nd cycle, p. 168.

(4) — — 2nd cycle, p. 169, 170.

(5) See, with regard to this question, *Le Seizième siècle* of DARMSTETER and HATZFELD, pp. 115 and 229.



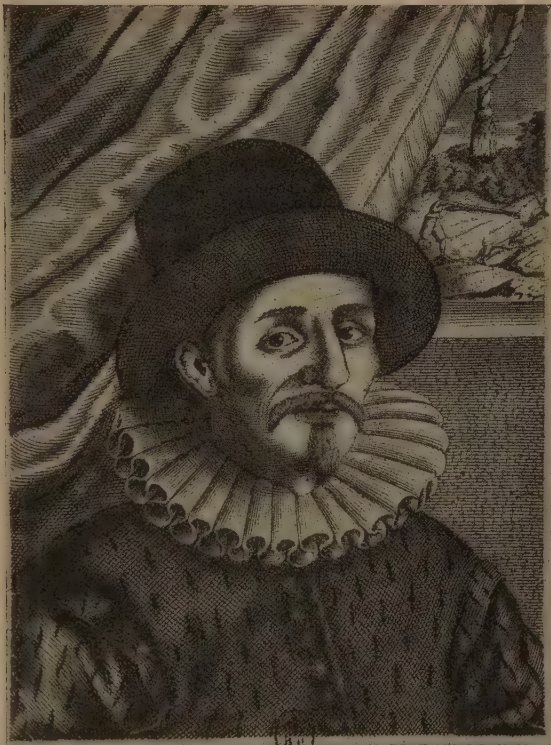
The name of **JEAN DAURAT** completes the members of the Pleiad. He was the master of Ronsard, du Bellay, Baif and Jodelle. Daurat only made Latin and Greek verses; but though not himself a French writer, it may be said that without him, perhaps, Ronsard and some of his most illustrious disciples would never have known the sources from which they borrowed.

## 2. Contemporaries of the Pleiad.

### GUILLAUME DE SALUSTE, SEIGNEUR DU BARTAS (1544-

1590). — We have said that Ronsard was classic in that he had taken all his inspiration from profane antiquity, except in his *Discours*. But, in this period of controversy and religious wars, biblical antiquity could not be entirely disregarded; and it was a protestant, du Bartas, who, familiar with the sacred texts, on one hand brought French poetry into connection with mediæval traditions, and on the other preceded the romanticists in the use of the Christian marvellous. Jeanne d'Albret, Queen of Navarre, advised this Gascon nobleman to write the

episode of *Judith* in verse; and du Bartas composed in 1575 a poem in six cantos upon this subject, which met with little success (1). Meanwhile, he was occupied with a more grandiose work, *La Semaine ou la Création*, which appeared in 1578.—Du Bartas, while scrupulously following the biblical narrative, profits



GUILLAUME DE SALUSTE, SEIGNEUR DU BARTAS  
à Paris chez Louis Vandorme en la Cour du Palais proche la porte de M. le B. Prévost

PORTRAIT OF GUILLAUME DU BARTAS  
From an anonymous print of the XVI century.

(1) Catholics accused du Bartas of having made, in the sixth book of *Judith*, an apology for regicide. See this passage in *Morceaux choisis* of DARMSTETER, p. 251, and the note on p. 253.

cleverly by every suggestion in the text to develop and expand his work, which abounds in brilliant descriptions, and is written in a vigorous and highly coloured style. His imagination also provides him with episodes comparable to those which Milton or Klopstock drew from the Holy books. The following passages will always be read with admiration: That in which God contemplates his work, as a painter his picture, *La terre après le déluge*; *Le lion d'Androclès*;— and in *La Seconde Semaine* (a sequel of the foregoing, and never completed), *Le Cheval dompté par Caïn* (1).

*La Semaine* achieved great celebrity not only in France but abroad, and was translated into all languages. Tasso, Milton and Gæthe were inspired by it. In France it quickly went out of fashion; and to-day, critics, having discovered a few childish exaggerations in du Bartas' language, some curious compound words like *donne-âme*, *porte-jour*, *aime-vers*, *chasse-ordure*, or repetitions of syllables such as *flo-flotter*, *ba-battre*, etc., or some obscure inversions, du Bartas is classed, without appeal, among poets who may be ridiculed. This judgment is rather severe.

**AGRIPPA D'AUBIGNÉ** (1552-1630) was also a Protestant. Although du Bartas had taken part in the religious wars, had fought beside Henri IV at Ivry and had died in 1590 of his wounds, his work retains a certain serenity; it carries us to far-away times and the poet inserts no *current events*. Agrippa d'Aubigné, on the contrary, was a militant Calvinist, even in his works. Born in 1552 at the château of Saint-Maury, in Saintonge, he was a sort of infant prodigy, learning Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Italian and Spanish. During his long and active life, d'Aubigné was both captain and poet. From 1573 until 1593 he fought with Henri IV, and after the abjuration of the king he retired sulkily to his estates. He had just been restored to favour when Henri IV was assassinated. He took part in the resistance of the protestants against Louis XIII. When he had made his submission, he went to Geneva and died there in 1630. Few biographies are as curious to study in detail as that of d'Aubigné, whether for the knowledge thus acquired of a sincere and irreducible Protestant, or for its character as a very *personal* work. Elsewhere d'Aubigné has recounted his life, writing of himself in the third person (2).

Further on, we shall analyse d'Aubigné's prose works (3); in this chapter it is only as a poet that we consider him. A fervent admirer of Ronsard, he at first regarded poetry merely as a diversion. He wrote *Le Printemps*, in three

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 173.

(2) *Sa vie, à ses enfants*, appears in vol. 1 of the *Œuvres complètes de d'Aubigné*, Réaume edition. The interest afforded by this biography extends beyond the sixteenth century, when we remember that Agrippa was the father of that Constant d'Aubigné whose bad conduct saddened his father's old age, and whose daughter was Madame de Maintenon. M. S. Rocheblave, in his book entitled *La Vie d'un Héros* (Hachette, 1913), has presented a very fine and very just portrait of Agrippa d'Aubigné.

(3) Cf. p. 275.

parts: *Hécatombe à Diane* (sonnets of gallantry dedicated to Mlle. de Lezay, whom he married), *Stances* and *Odes* (1). Toward the close of his life he was again to write short pieces, but more intimate in tone and of a penetrating melancholy. Then he wrote a poem, like du Bartas, on *La Création*.

But his masterpiece is the pamphlet in seven cantos entitled *Les Tragiques*. The idea came to him in 1577, during his convalescence at Castel-Jaloux. He wrote it in intervals of battles, in camps, in trenches, and the verses often breathe the ardour of the carnage or the odour of powder. He finished it after the death of Henri IV and published it in 1616.—The seven cantos bear the following titles: *Misères* (a picture of the suffering of the people, of the desolation of the towns and country during the religious wars) (2); *Princes* (a vivid and eloquent satire on court life); *Chambre dorée* (corruption and prevarication of judges); *Feux* (torture of Protestants burned at the stake); *Fers* (massacres and imprisonments); *Vengeance* (men are stricken by divine vengeance) (3); *Jugement* (God divides at the Last Day the good from the wicked) (4).—This work is, then, a succession of descriptions and satirical pieces, and no consecutive plan must be sought for. D'Aubigné's merits are sincerity, animation, eloquence, strength in thought and expression, picturesqueness in details; his defects are diffusion, obscurity, exaggeration. Certain passages place d'Aubigné alongside the Ronsard of the *Discours*, and the Victor Hugo of the *Châtiments*.



PORTRAIT OF AGRIPPA D'AUBIGNÉ  
From the picture at the Library of Geneva.

**AMADIS JAMYN** (1530-1585), a pupil of Turnèbe and Daurat, and friend of Ronsard, is sometimes counted among the Pleiad in place of Pontus de Thyard.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 183.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 178.

(3) — — — 2nd cycle, p. 180.

(4) — — — 1st cycle, p. 84; 2nd cycle, p. 181.

He was a learned poet, highly esteemed by his contemporaries, and whose work was of considerable extent (sonnets, elegies, a poem of the *chase*, translation of a part of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*); but he was not very original, even in his faults.

**OLIVIER DE MAGNY** (?—1560) at first appeared as a graceful poet in his *Gaylés* (1554), then as a subtle elegiac poet in his *Soupirs* (1557), which may be compared with the *Regrets* of du Bellay. Finally, his *Odes* (1559) are very interesting on account of the variety of rhythm, and the style.

Such were the principal poets of the sixteenth century. Vauquelin de la Fresnaye, Desportes and Bertaut we shall consider as immediate predecessors of Malherbe, and shall study them farther on as transitional poets (1).

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(1) Cf. p. 302.





DECORATIVE FRIEZE, BY ETIENNE DELAUNE [1518 (?)–1585 (?)]

## CHAPTER IV.

### RABELAIS. — THE STORY-WRITERS.

#### SUMMARY

**FRANÇOIS RABELAIS** (1490-1553), born at Chinon, was a monk and then physician; sojourned at Lyons, Rome, Metz, etc., and led a very unstable existence.

2. He published *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* from 1533 to 1553, in four books; the fifth appeared ten years after his death, and is of doubtful authenticity.

3. *Gargantua*, son of *Grangousier*, a giant, travels, studies at the University of Paris; he helps his father fight King *Picrochole*. The monk *Jean des Entommeures* valiantly attacks the enemy, and to recompense him *Gargantua* gives him the abbey of *Thélème*, where the rule is "Do as you please." — *Pantagruel*, son of *Gargantua*, studies at Orléans and Paris, and then meets *Panurge*. The latter, not knowing if he should marry or not, undertakes a long journey, consulting successively several personages, until he reaches the oracle of the *Dive bouteille*, who answers him, "Drink".

4. The characters are very simple, incarnating, on one hand, the contradictory tendencies of Rabelais himself, on the other symbolising institutions and abuses which Rabelais satirised.

5. The pedagogy of Rabelais may be thus summed up: love of science, object lessons, physical exercises. Not enough importance given to the moral side of education; the master does not seem to leave enough initiative to the pupil.

6. As a writer, Rabelais is remarkable for his vocabulary and verbal power.

II. OTHER STORY-WRITERS. — **BONAVENTURE DES PÉRIERS** published in 1537 the *Carillon du Monde*, a bold pamphlet against religion; after his death appeared his *Nouvelles*, in which he shows himself a charming raconteur; — **MARGUERITE DE VALOIS**, sister of François I, composed, in imitation of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, *l'Heptaméron*, a collection of tales which only appeared after her death, in 1598; — **BRANTOME** wrote the *Vie des Grands Capitaines*, the *Vie des Dames illustres*, etc.

## I. — RABELAIS.



DECORATED LETTER  
engraved by Nicolai et  
A. Van Lest, 1571.

life. — The facts of Rabelais' life remained for a long time *legendary*, and composed of adventures borrowed from his own amusing inventions; but they now seem to have been definitely settled by serious documents. They still include, however, a few contradictions and obscurities.

François Rabelais, born at Chinon in 1490 or 1495, was the fifth child of a small wine-grower, who perhaps settled in the town as a publican or apothecary, and whose house bore, in the seventeenth century, the sign of the *Painted Cellar*. The father wished to make his last-born child a monk, and the young François studied at the Benedictine Abbey of Seuillé, and then at the convent of La Beaumette, near Angers, with the Cordeliers. It was here he came to know Geoffroy d'Estissac, later Bishop of Maillezais, and one of his most powerful protectors. Geoffroy entered him in the Abbey of the Cordeliers at Fontenay-le-Comte, where Rabelais stayed for fifteen years, and was ordained priest. In 1523, Rabelais left this convent for the Benedictine Abbey of Ligugé, as his passionate love of learning, particularly for Greek, and his correspondence with Erasmus and Budé had laid him under suspicion and rendered him useless to an order of mendicants. Whether he had been imprisoned after a search in his cell, with Pierre Amy, a young religious passionately devoted, like himself, or whether he made his escape to Greek? It is not known. At all events, it is sure that in the Benedictine Abbey he found a more favourable milieu. But he did not stay long, for in 1525 he donned the habit of a secular priest and began his travels. This period of his life remains obscure; but we know that he was even then protected not only by Geoffroy d'Estissac and Tiraqueau (1), but also by Guillaume du Bellay, lord of Langey, who had caused the cure of Souday in the Perche to be given to him. Rabelais is known to have visited Poitiers, Bourges, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Avignon and Paris, and in 1530 he studied medicine at Montpellier. These "*voyages d'études*" were the fashion in the sixteenth century, and Rabelais must have gone from one university to another to compare masters and methods. At Montpellier he was the pupil of Rondelet, whom he has depicted under the name of *Rondibilis*.

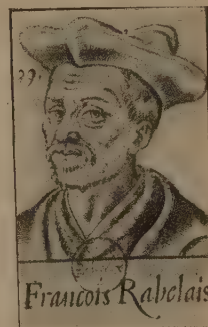
In 1531, Rabelais was at Lyons, practicing medicine. From November, 1532,

(1) *Tiraqueau* (André), who died in 1558, was first sepeschal at Fontenay-le-Comte, then councillor in the *Parlement* at Paris in 1551. Honest magistrate, and very distinguished lawyer, he wrote several works on law, published after his death.

to the end of 1533 he was physician in the great Lyons hospital at a salary of forty livres a year. He worked on the edition of the *Épîtres médicales* of Giovanni Manardi, a physician of Ferrara, and wrote a dedication in Latin to Tiraqueau. Then the bookseller, Sébastien Gryphe, published for him a Latin translation of Hippocrates and Galien, with a dedication to Geoffroy d'Estissac. It is evident that in his new situation Rabelais did not neglect his old friends. About this same time he published some *almanachs*, intended to distract and amuse his patients, and for this same purpose wrote the *Pantagrueline pronostication*, and rehandled, for a bookseller, a popular legend under the title, *Les Grandes et Inestimables Chroniques du grand et énorme géant Gargantua* (1532). "More copies of this were sold in one month," he said, "than of Bibles in nine years." It was probably then that he had the idea of enlarging and continuing this history, and it is believed that we may ascribe to 1533 Book II of the later editions (the 1st of *Pantagruet*), and to 1535 the *Gargantua* which is in the first book, and which is probably a recasting of the *Grandes et Inestimables Chroniques*, etc.

At the end of the year 1533, Cardinal Jean du Bellay passed through Lyons, and took Rabelais with him to Rome, possibly as physician to his household. Rabelais, always greedy for learning, and capable of assimilating the most diverse sciences, then began to study archeology, his intention being to publish a topography of antique Rome. Encouraged by du Bellay he even began excavations; but an Italian, Marliani, published in 1534 a work which rendered Rabelais' useless, and the latter contented himself by writing a Latin preface for Marliani. Returning to Lyons in March, 1534, Rabelais was deprived of his position as physician to the hospital for having absented himself without leave. He returned to Rome, where he stayed from July, 1535, to March, 1536, still with Cardinal du Bellay. His great preoccupation at this time was to regularise his ecclesiastical position, but he continued his interest in everything, and his Latin letters to d'Estissac again contain traces of his study of archeology, medicine, botany, etc... Rabelais had asked permission of Pope Paul III to return to the Benedictines and practice medicine. The Pope, in a decree dated January 18, 1536, gave him this double permission, and in very flattering terms. After a short sojourn in Paris, Rabelais returned to Montpellier, where, one after another, he took the degrees of licentiate and doctor of medicine (May, 1537).

In 1538, thanks to the always efficient protection of Cardinal du Bellay, Rabelais was made canon of Saint-Maur-les-Fossés, a secularised Benedictine Abbey. The following year he was summoned to Turin by Guillaume du Bellay, lord of



PORTRAIT OF RABELAIS  
 From a print of the  
 XVI century.

Langey, who had become governor of that city. In 1541, he returned to France with du Bellay, who died in 1543, after which Rabelais resumed his travels. In 1543, Rabelais obtained permission to print his *Third Book* (the second of *Pantagruel*): at which time he must have been restored to favour, for this third book was very bold. But in 1547, after the death of François I and the torture of Étienne Dolet, he prudently retired to Metz, where he became physician to the city at a salary of 140 livres a year. From Metz he implored Cardinal du Bellay to help him out of his difficulties, and du Bellay, who returned to Rome at the beginning of 1548, summoned Rabelais there; here he remained for two years, this being his third visit to Rome. He returned with his patron in 1551, obtained the cures of Meudon and Saint-Christophe-du-Jambet, which he resigned almost immediately, published in 1552 the *Fourth Book* of his work (the third of *Pantagruel*), dedicating it to Cardinal Odet de Chatillon, and died probably in April 1553, without having published his *Fifth Book*.

In studying this biography we are struck by the utter *instability* of Rabelais, who never passed more than a year or two in the same city. But, on the other hand, he was always faithful to his patrons, who never abandoned him: Geoffroy d'Estissac and the two du Bellay appear constantly in his life. In spite of the legal proceedings against his *Tiers livre* and *Quart livre*, which were twice demanded by the Sorbonne, we perceive that Rabelais was never arrested, and that the publication of his work was not interrupted. However this may be, his agitated life, which was not without resemblance to that of Marot, of Bonaventure des Périers, and Henri Estienne, remains in several points enigmatical.

**The Works of Rabelais. — Bibliography.** — Let us settle at first, briefly, the bibliographical question, which is very important to an understanding of the works themselves:—In 1532, Rabelais published at Lyons *Les Grandes et Inestimables Chroniques du grand et énorme géant Gargantua*.—In 1533, he published at Lyons also, *Pantagruel*, signed Alcofribas Nasier (anagram of François Rabelais). In 1533, he recast, in order to make it uniform with *Pantagruel*, the *Gargantua*, and published the text which formed, from that time, the First Book, *Pantagruel* becoming the Second. These two books were several times reprinted together, before the appearance of the Third Book.—In 1546, the Third Book appeared at Paris, signed by the master, *François Rabelais*, Doctor of Medicine.

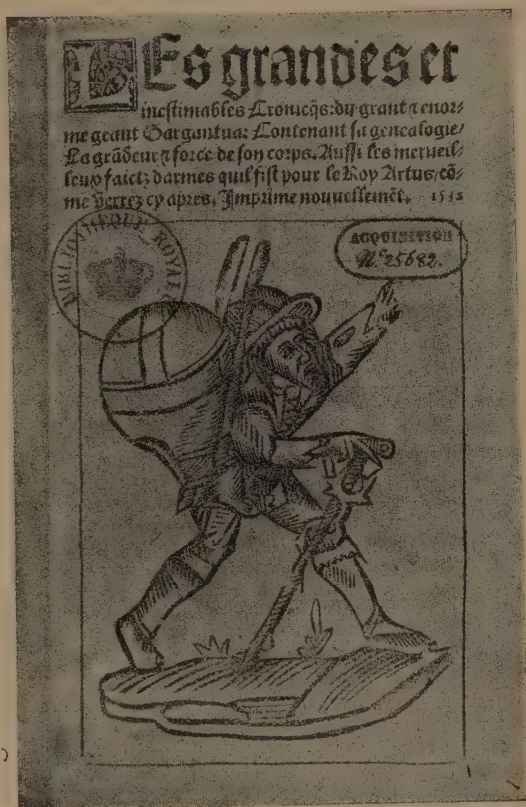
In 1547, appeared two editions comprising the three Books. In 1548, the Fourth Book was published at Lyons in eleven chapters, incomplete; the edition of the Fourth Book in sixty-seven chapters appeared in 1552, also signed by M. François Rabelais, Doctor of Medicine.—In 1553, the Four Books appeared together.—Rabelais died about 1553.—The Fifth Book appeared only in 1562, and in its complete form in 1564.—After 1563, it is part of all the editions of Rabelais, but its authenticity is doubtful. And when we remember that the Fifth Book, whose sub-title is *l'île Sonnante*, is the one which contains the boldest and most fre-



quently cited passages of Rabelais, it is greatly to be wished that we might arrive at a definite conclusion whether Rabelais is or is not its author. Did he leave the MS. with friends, with orders not to publish it, for the sake of prudence, until ten years after his death? Or, on the contrary, is it a sort of pamphlet whose author wished to shelter himself in the fame of Rabelais?—The question has not yet been answered.

In any event, an important observation results from this bibliography: that Rabelais, whose active life began in 1523 and finished in 1553, published his works at long intervals, the different parts appearing in 1533, 1535, 1546 and 1548-52. In the intervening years how much he studied and travelled! His books were evidently for him simply a distraction.

**General Analysis.** — In his *Prologue*, Rabelais invites his reader to seek out the real thought under his buffoonery.—The First Book (*Gargantua*) consists of 58 chapters:—*Gargantua*, son of *Grandgousier* and of *Gargamelle*, cries, on coming into the world, "Something to drink! something to drink!" He consumes the milk of 17,913 cows; to clothe him each shirt requires 900 ells of linen from *Châtellerault*; for his doublet, 813 ells of white satin; for his hose, 1,105 ells of white worsted; and for his robe 9,600 ells of blue velvet. After a few amusing details of his infancy Rabelais comes, in chapter xiii, to his education. His father gives him as master *un grand docteur sophiste*, *Thubal Holoferne*, and then "*un autre vieux tousseux*", master *Jobelin Bridé*. Before long, masters and methods are changed, and he passes under the discipline of *Ponocrates*. But before again beginning work, *Gargantua* makes a journey to Paris, by way of *Orléans*; his mare, in driving off the flies with her tail, knocks down all the trees in the



THE GREAT AND INESTIMABLE CHRONICLES  
OF THE GREAT AND ENORMOUS GIANT GARGANTUA  
Title of the edition of 1532.

country of Beauce, which ever since has remained treeless. At Paris, Gargantua diverts himself by hanging the bells of Notre-Dame around the neck of his mare; the University sends a deputation to him, and Janotus de Bragmardo pronounces a burlesque harangue in *macaronic* Latin, in an appeal for the restitution of the bells (ch. xix). *Gargantua* consents to return them. Rabelais then develops (ch. xxi-xxiv) the educational plan of *Ponocrates*, which merits special study (1).

War soon breaks out between *Grandgousier* and one of his neighbours, King *Picrochole*. The inhabitants of Lerné, *Picrochole's* subjects, invade the territory of *Grandgousier*, and meeting no resistance ravage it as far as to the Abbey of Seuillé. There the frightened monks shut themselves in their chapel and pray while the enemy pillages their monastery. But one of them, Brother *Jean des Entommeures*, seizes the staff of the Cross and knocks down 13,622 of the pillagers. However, *Picrochole* goes on with the war. *Gargantua*, recalled by his father, and aided by *Gymnaste*, *Eudémon* and especially *Frère Jean*, completely defeats *Picrochole's* army. To reward *Frère Jean*, *Gargantua* has built for him the Abbey de Thélème (ch. lii-lviii), a sort of magnificent château without monks or nuns, and destined for the reception of a number of young noblemen and noble young ladies, the rules being entirely included in the formula, *fay ce que vaudras* "Do as you please". The days are passed in games and amusements of all sorts. The young men and maidens leave the Abbey in order to be married.

*Second Book.* — After giving a long and amusing genealogy of *Gargantua's* ancestors, Rabelais recounts the birth of his son *Pantagruel*. *Gargantua* rejoices to have such a beautiful child, but its birth costs the life of his wife, *Badebec*, and he does not know whether to laugh or weep (2). The little *Pantagruel* proves to be as voracious as his father. When he is of an age to study, he visits the most famous universities: Poitiers, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Montpellier, Avignon, Bourges, Angers, Orléans. He talks with the *limousin* scholar who so effectually murders Latin, visits in Paris the library of the Abbey of Saint-Victor, and receives a fine letter from his father who urges him to study zealously (ch. viii) (3). Finally—and this episode decides the character of all the rest of the work—*Pantagruel* meets *Panurge* (who is depicted in chapter xvi). Then, after several adventures in company with *Panurge*, he defeats the *Dipsodes* and the giants.

*Third Book.* — Here begin (ch. ix) the adventures of *Panurge*, who, not being sure if he should marry or not, successively consults *Pantagruel*, the sibyl of *Panzoust*, the mute *Nazdecabre*, the poet *Raminagrobis*, *Epistémon* (*Pantagruel's* preceptor), the magician *Her Trippa* (4), *Frère Jean des Entommeures*; the Doctor *Rondibilis* (5), the theologian *Trouillogan* (6), the Judge *Bridoye*, who decides processes by throwing dice, the jester *Triboulet*—and without obtaining either an affirmative or negative answer. *Pantagruel* and *Panurge* then resolve to consult the oracle of the *Dive Bouteille*. The Third Book ends with a description of the herb called *pantagruélium* (hemp), and an enumeration of its properties.

*Fourth Book.* — *Pantagruel*, *Panurge*, *Frère Jean*, *Epistémon*, *Gymnaste*, etc., set sail from the port of *Thalasse*. One of the first incidents of the voyage is that of the *moutons de Panurge* (ch. v-viii): *Panurge*, insulted by a merchant, *Dindenault*, who is going to sell his sheep in a foreign country, swears to have vengeance; after long and amusing debates with the merchant, he buys one of his sheep and throws it into the midst of the sea, whether all the rest of the sheep follow it. *Dindenault* himself, grasping one of his animals, is drawn into the sea and drowned (7).—They arrive at the island of the *Chicanous*

(1) Cf. p. 224. — *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 87.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 191.

(3) — — 2nd cycle, p. 195.

(4) Henri-Corneille Agrippa, author of the *Philosophie occulte*.

(5) The physician, Rondelet, professor of medicine at Montpellier.

(6) Cf. the scene between Sganarelle and Marphurius, in *Le Mariage forcé* by Molière.

(7) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 92.

(ch. xii); the *chicanous* are the bailiffs, the *sergeants*, who often receive a beating, but live by it. The ships are assailed by a dreadful tempest. *Panurge* laments, while *Frère Jean* lends a hand and helps to save the flotilla. As soon as they land, *Panurge's* courage returns, and he reproves amusingly his exhausted companions.—They rest on the island of *Tapinois*, where *Quaresmeprenant* reigns, and of whom Rabelais makes a curious analysis (ch. xxx-xxxii); then on the island of *Farouche*, abode of the *Andouilles* (chap. xxv-xlii); then on the island of the *Papefigues* (this is probably a satire on Protestants) (xlv-xlvi); then on the island of the *Papimanes* (satire on Catholics), whose Bishop, *Homenaz*, receives the travellers enthusiastically; and at the house of *Messire Gaster* (the stomach).

*Fifth Book.* — We arrive at the *Ile Sonnante* (Rome), and the author enumerates the different kinds of birds which swarm there, white, black, gray, red, blue: *clergaux*, *pres-tregaux*, *monagaux*, *èvesgaulx*, *cardingaulx*, and *papegaut*, “*qui est unique en son espèce.*” All these birds come from a distant country called *Joursanpain*. *Pantagruel* and his companion are admitted to see *Papegaut* (i-viii). Later the ships stop at the island of the *Ferremets*, where all sorts of weapons and tools are made (ix); then at the *Guichet*, inhabited by the *Chats-fourrés*, of whom *Grippe-minaud* is the Archduke (1). These chapters (xi-xv) are a violent satire on the members of the courts of justice.—The island of the *Apedeftes* is a satire upon taxes and those who levy them.—Chapters xviii-xxii deal with the kingdom of *l'Entéléchie*, whose queen is the lady *Quintessence*, god-daughter of Aristotle (satire on the Sorbonne and scholasticism).—Then follows another satire on monks, in the island inhabited by the *frères Fredons* (xxvi-xxviii).—Finally they come to the country of *Lanternois*, where lives the oracle of the *Dive Bouteille* (ch. xxxi); a long description of the temple and the fountain (xxxii-xlii); *Panurge*, initiated by the priestess *Bacube* hears the answer of the *Bouteille*, “*trinch*” (xlii). *Bacube* reads in a sacred book the interpretation of this word: it is *buvez*.

**Composition and Characters.** — A grotesque *Iliad* followed by a satirical *Odyssey*, Rabelais' work is more episodic than it is “composed.” *Gargantua* (First Book) is the only part which has a beginning, a middle and an end; the whole story of *Pantagruel* is at loose ends, without any necessary connection between the episodes, and nothing would prevent the author, if he liked, from retarding the reply of the *Dive Bouteille*, which was the object of this incoherent voyage, to a Sixth or Tenth Book.

The unity of the work, and especially of the second part, lies, then, in the characters themselves who, through so many adventures and digressions, always remain consistent. At the same time, the *relations* and *proportions* of these characters are not continuously and logically retained. These giants, *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*, are presented to us during their infancy as the heroes of really “gigantic” episodes; we see *Gargantua* still behaving like a giant during his sojourn in Paris, and *Pantagruel* when he stays at Orléans. But when *Pantagruel* meets “*l'écolier limousin*,” or *Panurge*, who is “*de stature moyenne*,” the two interlocutors talk like you and me. *Pantagruel* embarks with *Frère Jean* and *Panurge*, and from this moment, by some mystery, he is no longer a giant. None of the inhabitants of the numerous islands where they land makes the slightest remark concerning his height. In this respect, Rabelais' book is much inferior

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 199.

to Swift's *Gulliver*, in which the author never loses sight of the physical, moral and intellectual *disproportion* of his hero, and draws from this the most successful satirical strokes.

This reflection being made, what is the intrinsic value of the characters themselves? Are they powerful incarnations of human types, and is Rabelais equally a creator with the great French and foreign writers of romance? His giants are honest and good, but their *psychology* is very simple: they are benevolent ogres. *Pantagruel* even represents a sort of sceptical moderation and lazy indulgence which becomes completely colourless. As to *Panurge*, "who had sixty-three ways of finding the money he needed, of which the most honourable and

usual was by furtive larcen, he was as wicked a card-sharper, wine-bibber, streetwalker, vagabond, as any in Paris, but in other respects the best fellow in the world (1). " According to the Greek etymology of his name, he is valiant in words and cowardly in action, a poltroon and cruel; and he is to the last degree cynical in his discourse. One wonders why the good *Pantagruel* accepts for a companion, "to love all his life", to guide in council and during his voyages, a rogue like this. Without doubt this resulted in a comical contrast which Rabelais imagin-



THE EMBLEM AND SIGNATURE OF RABELAIS  
Taken from "*Hippocrate*" which he possessed.

ed merely to cause laughter, and it would be perhaps too naïve to seek anything symbolical there. But the strong, bold monk, *Frère Jean*, is more likable; though his language is coarse, his heart is honest, and his rough talk is less disquieting than the amiability of *Panurge*. Emile Faguet interprets these three characters (three, counting the giants as one), in saying that they present, each in his own way, one of the aspects or tendencies of Rabelais' own character, who was at the same time sensible and prudent like *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*, energetic and a fighter like *Frère Jean*, a bragging, paradoxical pettipogger like *Panurge*. "And it is something to have thus portrayed, while merely amusing oneself, the two or three great general traits of the race to which one belonged (2)." All the same, it remains true that none of these

(1) Second Book, chap. xvi.

(2) EMILE FAGUET, *Seizième siècle*, p. 95



creations is comparable to Shakespeare's Falstaff, Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and *Sancho*, or even to Lesage's *Gil Blas*.

A few secondary characters are well drawn : for instance, *Homenaz*, Bishop of the *Papimanes* ; *Grippe-minaud*, Archduke of the *Chats-fourrés*, and *Janotus de Bragmardo*, sent by the Sorbonne to *Gargantua* to demand the bells of Notre-Dame.

**Rabelais' Ideas, their Meaning and Importance.** — But Rabelais was less intent upon creating a work of art, with living and logical characters, than writing a religious and social satire, and setting forth, in an amusing form, a philosophy. It cannot be denied that Rabelais protested against abuses of his time. Even without considering the Fifth Book, since its authenticity is doubtful, and in leaving aside the *Ile Sonnante* and the *Chats-fourrés*, the chapters on the *Papimanes* and the *Chicanous* suffice to show with what boldness Rabelais attacked the monks, ecclesiastical discipline, church ceremonies, the policy and person of the Popes, civil and criminal justice. Only, his readers should be warned that they will frequently be deceived, and will find it difficult to arrive at a just estimate of their author. In fact, most readers approach Rabelais without sufficient preparation, without knowledge of mediæval literature and that of the first half of the sixteenth century. In *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* they admire many things which they might be much surprised to find elsewhere, in *Renart*, in the *Roman de la Rose*, in the *fabliaux*, the *farces*, and in Latin and other foreign works ; and from this it must be concluded that Rabelais, in a great measure, was more an inheritor of the past than a revealer of the future ; that these apparently bold attacks upon the monks and the courts of justice were jests in current use for four centuries, and of which Rabelais more often did not even renovate the form. It is true, on the other hand, that these gross or piquant satires assume in his hands a more lively character, and constitute, as we cannot doubt, a *system*. Banal and traditional as they are in themselves, under his pen they become *arguments*—if indeed we may believe, with Ferdinand Brunetière, that Rabelais attacked all those who “ deformed nature under pretext of reforming it.” To *Physis* (Nature) he opposed *Antiphysis* ; and this general idea gives its comparative depth to his buffoonery (1).

The most lucid symbol of the Rabelaisian philosophy is the *Abbey de Thélème*, whose device : *Fay ce que voudras*, is perhaps, even more than the *Trinch* of the *Dive Bouteille*, the key of the whole book. As to this *Trinch* (*buvez*), it should probably be interpreted in a figurative sense (drink of learning) ; but the author of the Fifth Book, whoever he was, leaves the sense doubtful and confused.

To the opinion of Brunetière, who perhaps exaggerates the philosophic depth of Rabelais, it is useful to oppose that of Émile Faguet, who explains with much more clarity and simplicity this enigmatical work (2).

(1) F. BRUNETIÈRE, *Histoire de la littérature française classique*, I, p. 136-139.

(2) EMILE FAGUET, *Seizième siècle* (Rabelais), p. 77.

**The Pedagogy of Rabelais.**—It is proper to consider to some extent the pedagogical theories of this many-sided man, who was monk, physician, Hellenist, Hebraist, archæologist, etc. To understand his program well we should first read the *Lettre de Gargantua à son fils Pantagruel* (Second Book, chap. viii). In this piece, which was probably written before the *chapitres pédagogiques* of the First Book, Rabelais sets forth his general ideas, which may be summed up as follows:—Parents survive in their children, not only *in body but in soul*, therefore they should carefully occupy themselves in having them *educated and instructed* (... *tant en vertu, honnesteté et prudence, comme en tout savoir libéral et honneste*). But formerly, during the infancy of Gargantua, “*the times were still full of darkness and smacking of the unhappiness and calamity caused by the Goths... Now all sorts of discipline are restored... All the world is full of learned folk, of very accomplished preceptors, of ample libraries... What else should I say? The women and the maidens have aspired to this praise and heavenly manna of doctrine.*” What then should be studied? Nearly everything: Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, geometry, arithmetic, music, astronomy, natural history, medicine, anatomy... We need have no doubt that Rabelais mentions here all that he himself had learned or wished to learn. This “*abîme de science*” is his own brain. “*But because, according to the sage Solomon, Wisdom never dwells in the wicked soul, and learning without conscience is but the soul’s ruin, we should,*” adds Gargantua, “*serve, love and fear God, and let all our thoughts and our spirit repose in him... Hold in suspicion the abuses of the world. Give not over your heart to vanity, for this life is transitory, but the word of God is eternal...*”

Following this letter, in which Rabelais seems to have expressed, with emotional eloquence, his passion for learning and his admiration for the Renaissance, we should read Chapters xiv, xv, xxi, xxiii and xxiv of *Gargantua*. There we find, first, an amusing critique of the abuses Rabelais wishes to oppose. The young Gargantua has two *sophists* for preceptors, Thubal Holoferne and Jobelin Bridé, who make him swallow all the rubbish of scholasticism. But the child, instead of reaping profit, becomes “*fou, niais, tout resveux et rassoté.*” His father, Grandgousier, gives him a new master, Ponocrates, and he, before subjecting his pupil to his system, allows him to live in his own way for a time, in order to judge of his capacity. He is a *doctor* who first makes his *diagnosis*. After which, he purges him with hellebore, “*pour lui nettoyer toute l’allération et perverse habitude du cerveau*”; and the new régime begins. These are its essential points:—To rise at four in the morning; while Gargantua makes his toilet, his tutor reads him a few pages of the Bible; he then goes to study the state of the sky; he repeats the lesson of the preceding day which becomes, we should note well, the occasion for practical reflections. “*Then, for three full hours, he is read to.*” Reading here means *reasoned explication*, in one of the languages the pupil is learning, and in this he takes an active part also.—

After which, they go out, and play ball, or tennis, "*exercising the body as they had just exercised the mind.*"—Then the repast, during which there is sometimes reading, sometimes a conversation concerning the nature and properties of everything served on the table: these are *object lessons*.—The meal finished, they play cards, and have music, avoiding all violent exercise. (We must remark the number and importance of the hygienic observations in this program.) Again, three hours of study, reading and writing.—Then begin the more serious physical exercises: horseback-riding, exercise with the lance, the axe, the spear, hunting, wrestling, swimming, scaling walls, etc. Clothes are then changed, and they return home slowly, herborizing. The evening meal is more copious than that of midday. "*It is the true diet, prescribed by the best medical art.*" During the evening they sing; sometimes they pay visits to educated people; they observe the stars; they review, in the Pythagorean manner, the studies of the day; they say their prayers... "*Ce fait, entraient en leur repos.*"

On rainy days, the program is modified. They eat less, and physical exercises are replaced by indoor occupations; *Gargantua* "*makes bundles of hay, and saws wood.*" He practices painting and sculpture; he goes to hear public lessons; and especially, he visits shops and workshops. Finally, once a month master and pupil go to pass a day in the country.

In this somewhat over-full program, the defect is perhaps the continual presence of the tutor with his pupil. Rousseau (*Émile*) falls into the same excess. The result is that the child never feels his own responsibility for his work and his conduct. Furthermore, it is well to correct the program in *Gargantua* by the letter to *Pantagruel*: in the latter only we may perceive that Rabelais attached great importance to *moral education*, too much neglected in *Gargantua*. Finally, it appears that Rabelais had exaggerated the necessity for *learning* in the general sense of the word; his pupil develops his memory and becomes an all-round man of learning; but does he know how to think and reason? Has he good sense and discernment? Is he a *man*, before being a *savant*? We may well fear that he has "*a head better filled than made.*"



PANTAGRUEL

Title of the edition of 1537.

**Rabelais the Writer.** — Nevertheless, whatever real meaning may be attached to the *Gargantua* and the *Pantagruel*, we must admire in Rabelais the animation and force of his style, the variety of his range which extends from great eloquence (*Lettre de Gargantua à son fils*) to buffoonery in dialogue (*Panurge's* sheep; the meeting between *Pantagruel* and *Panurge*, etc.), and unfortunately to the grossest triviality. His vocabulary is immense, and he often seems to amuse himself by piling up words upon words, with a virtuosity almost drunken... His style has retained more of its freshness than that of the greater part of his contemporaries; its merits are entirely French; it is ample, copious, clear though surcharged; and the final impression we retain is of a *verbal power* which places Rabelais with Bossuet, Corneille and Victor Hugo.



PORTRAIT OF MARGUERITE DE VALOIS,  
SISTER OF FRANÇOIS I

From an anonymous print on wood  
of the XVI century.

## II. — OTHER STORY-WRITERS.

**BONAVENTURE DES PÉRIERS**  
(1500-1544?). — Learned and accomplished, secretary to Marguerite de Navarre, whose writings he looked over and perhaps retouched, des Périers worked in 1534 on the translation of the Bible by Lefèvre d'Etaples, and wrote numerous verses. His best known work is the *Cymbalum mundi* (*Carillon du monde*) en françois, avec quatre dialogues poétiques, faits antiques joyeux

et facétieux. Published at Lyons in 1537, the *Cymbalum* was seized and destroyed by order of the *Parlement*. This work is supposed to be addressed by Thomas du Clénier (*l'Incrédule, the unbeliever*) to Pierre Tryocan (*le Croyant, the believer*); in a series of very transparent allegories, des Périers ridicules both Catholics and Protestants.—It is said that the persecutions of his enemies led him to commit suicide about 1544.—Several years after appeared, in 1538, *Les Nouvelles Récréations et Joyeux Devis*, a collection of tales a few of which have been attributed to his friends Pelletier du Mans and Denisot.—Des Périers is a



charming story-teller, full of wit and delicacy, and at the same time a most excellent writer (1).

**MARGUERITE DE VALOIS** (1492-1549). — Sister of François<sup>2</sup>I, and married in 1509 to the Duke d'Alençon, afterwards in 1527 to the King of Navarre, Henri d'Albret, Marguerite was a true patron of poets and thinkers in the first half of the sixteenth century. In her little court at Nérac, she received, lodged, and sometimes rescued from persecution Marot, Mellin de Saint-Gelais, Gruget, Deniset, Sainte-Marthe, Pelletier du Mans, Bonaventure des Périers, etc. While remaining herself a Catholic, which is evident in her *Mystères* and especially her *Dernières poésies*, she liked to protect those whose religious opinions exposed them to the severities of Parliament and the Sorbonne.

Boccaccio's famous *Tales*, the *Decameron*, had been translated into French by Antoine le Maçon in 1543, and dedicated to Marguerite. She resolved to imitate them, and composed the preface and drew up the plan of a new *Decameron* which was to include, like that of Boccaccio, ten days and a hundred *tales*. But she had not sufficient time to finish her book, and left it at the seventh day and the seventy-second tale. After her death in 1558, a first edition of these tales appeared under the title of the *Histoire des amants fortunés*; and in the following year, Claude Gruget, former secretary to Marguerite, published a second edition entitled, *L'Heptaméron des nouvelles de très illustre et très excellente princesse Marguerite de Valois, reine de Navarre*.



PORTRAIT OF BRANTÔME

Engraved in the xvii century, from an original sketch of the xvi.

(1) Read the nouvelles of B. des Périers in the *Seizième siècle* by DARMSTETER and HATZFELD, p. 120; and in the *Morceaux choisis* of F. GODEFROY, p. 286.

Five noblemen and five ladies, returning from Cautelets, are stopped in their journey by floods; they gather at Notre-Dame de Sarrance, and to pass the time decide to tell stories, which "shall all be true." Though following Boccaccio's plan, the originality of these tales lies in the fact that only a few of them are drawn from ancient French or Italian sources, and the rest are based on genuine adventures which supply their themes. Each tale—and this is also peculiar to this collection—is followed by a conversation among the different characters, who discuss the morality of the stories. Doubtless, there are many licentious tales among the number, which one is surprised to find in the work of a woman like Marguerite; but, considering its time, the book is characterised by propriety and good breeding; and, in its easy, leisurely style, and its taste for gallant or moral metaphysics, it was a forerunner of the novel of the seventeenth century.

**BRANTÔME** (1540-1614).—Pierre de Bourdeille, abbot of Brantôme, led, until the time of the Ligue, a most active and adventurous life in Italy, Spain, Africa, and France. Badly injured by a fall from his horse, he wrote his personal recollections of all the people he had met. This Gascon wrote "à la cavalière", with animation, wit and cynicism. His *Mémoires*, only published in 1665-66 include: *Vies des hommes illustres et des grands capitaines*, *Vies des dames illustres*, *Discours sur les duels*, etc. By the naturalism and freedom of his style Brantôme is the tale-teller *par excellence*; the only point of doubt lies in his morality (1).

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DECORATIVE FRIEZE BY ETIENNE DELAULNE [1518 (?) - 1585 (?) ]

## CHAPTER V.

### TRANSLATORS AND SCHOLARS.

#### SUMMARY

1. **AMYOT** (1513-1593) passed a laborious youth, and learned Greek under Pierre Danès, Professor at the **Collège de France**. He first taught Greek and Latin at the University of Bourges, and being charged by Henri II with a mission to the Council of Trent, he stayed two years at Rome. Upon his return the King made him tutor to his two sons (Charles IX and Henri III). It was then he published his translation of **Plutarch**.

Later being appointed Chief Almoner of France and Bishop of Auxerre, he abandoned profane authors for the Bible and the Fathers, and became an excellent preacher.

His translation of Plutarch's **Lives**, though not always very accurate, had these merits: it held up to an active and impassioned generation fine examples of human energy; it chose these examples from antiquity outside of and above all parties, and it presented them in a pleasing and simple style. (Amyot's version makes Plutarch seem *naïve*). — Amyot brought the **French language** to express the most varied facts and sentiments, and to enlarge its vocabulary.

2. **SCHOLARS**. — **HENRI ESTIENNE**, son of the famous printer, Robert Estienne, published in 1566 a pamphlet entitled **Apologie pour Hérodote**, and in 1572 his Greek dictionary (**Thesaurus linguæ græcæ**). In other works he defended the French language against italianism.

**ETIENNE PASQUIER** published in 1561-1570 his **Recherches de la France**. **CLAUDE FAUCHET** published his **Antiquités gauloises et françaises** (1579).

3. **SCIENTIFIC WRITERS**. — The chief are: **BERNARD PALISSY**, who was a precursor of our great modern geologists. — **AMBROISE PARÉ**, surgeon, who recorded in French the results of his researches, and the history of his campaigns. — **OLIVIER DE SERRES**, who published in 1600 his **Théâtre d'agriculture**.

## I. — JACQUES AMYOT (1513-1593).



DECORATED LETTER  
of the XVI century.

**Biography.** — Born at Melun, October 30, 1513, of very poor parents, Jacques Amyot came to Paris to complete his studies at the College of Navarre. Was he reduced, as it is said, to act as servant to his more fortunate comrades? And did he work at night by the light of his fire, as young Drouot did later? True or false, these legends show us that Amyot must have had to overcome difficulties in youth by an energetic will. He learned Greek under Pierre Danès, professor at the *Collège de France*; was tutor, at Bourges, to the children of Bouchetal, Secretary of State, who recommended him to Marguerite, sister of François I; and she procured for him the chair of Greek and Latin

at the University of Bourges where he taught for six years.—His first work was *Théagène et Chariclée*, translated from the Greek of Heliodorus (1547). Appointed Abbot of Bellozane by François I, he went to Venice with the ambassador of Henri II, Morvilliers de Bourges, and was entrusted with a letter from the king to the Council of Trent (1551). After a sojourn of two years at Rome, during which he employed his time in making learned researches in the Vatican library, he returned to France, and was appointed by Henri II tutor to his sons, the Dukes d'Orléans and d'Angoulême, who were both to be kings. In 1554 Amyot published his translation of Diodorus of Sicily. A new edition of *Théagène et Chariclée* appeared in 1559, and this was followed by *Daphnis et Chloé*, a pastoral by Longus. In the same year, 1559, appeared the first edition of Plutarch's *Lives*; and it was only in 1574 that Amyot added to this the *Œuvres morales* by the same author.—Meanwhile, his former pupil, Charles IX, had appointed him in 1560 Chief Almoner of France, Councillor of State, and abbot of several rich abbeys; soon after he gave him the Bishopric of Auxerre; and Henri III added to this the title of Commander of the Order of the Holy Ghost.—Amyot's last years were troubled and saddened by the civil war. The Leaguers of Auxerre accused him of having approved the murder of the Duke de Guise by Henri III, and incited the people against him. Obligated to flee, Amyot returned soon after to his bishopric, but he remained ill from that time to the day of his death, February 7, 1593.—During his last years he had renounced the study of profane writers for the Bible and the Fathers, and had become a noteworthy preacher.

**His Works.** — Among Amyot's works we should above all value his translation of Plutarch's *Lives*. It was here that he proved himself eminent by the quality of his mind, the charm of his style and the purity of his language.—



First of all, it was a happy idea, at a time when human energy was displayed in every form, from fanaticism to martyrdom, from brutality to heroism, to choose and popularise these biographies of the greatest men of Greek and Roman antiquity. Never before had such a collection of *examples* been offered for the admiration and imitation of modern society. Here were men of all sorts, great captains, statesmen, legislators, orators. Every reader could profit by the example of his choice. Here were no longer, as in the works of poets and romancers, fabulous characters, outside the range of humanity, but men whose faults Plutarch, a truthful and conscientious historian, did not hide, and in whom could be observed the full-blooded effort of will against human weakness.—On the other hand, these biographies were collections of anecdotes, precise and varied short stories, *bons mots*, maxims, without oratory or moralising; or, at any rate, if Plutarch had the intention of rehabilitating the Greeks as against the Romans, his plea then passed unperceived and had no interest for readers in the sixteenth century, who could admire, without second thoughts, Alexander and Caesar, Pericles and Scipio, Demosthenes and Cicero.—But, above all, the defects of the somewhat pedantic sophist in Plutarch disappeared in the translation, or, to put it more accurately, the *adaptation* of Amyot. He created entirely the *naïve* Plutarch. He gave to the original work a simple turn which brought out all the better the greatness of actions and thoughts, and lent to heroism an appearance of elegant ease very seductive to people of fashion.

Amyot thus performed a great service to the French language, in forcing it to the expression of so many diverse *conditions*, in gathering a vocabulary for war,



PORTRAIT OF JACQUES AMYOT

After the print of Leonard Gaultier (1561-vers 1630).

*politics, criticism, and everyday affairs*, in order to follow Plutarch's heroes through so many anecdotes and particularities. What gymnastics for the French language! especially if the author avoided neologisms, and always drew from French sources, and according to good usage. And that is what Amyot did, who was at once the richest and least pedantic of French writers of that period. It is readily understood, therefore, why in the seventeenth century he was regarded by the French Academy and Vaugelas as an authority (1).

**Other Translators.** — Although other translators cannot be compared to Amyot, if not in the question of exactitude (for we know what liberties he took with Plutarch), at least in that of style and influence, we should mention: *Claude de Seyssel* (1430-1520), translator of Diodorus, Xenophon and Thucydides; — *Pierre Saliat* (?), who published in 1536 a translation of Herodotus, dedicated to King Henri II. According to E. Egger, "Saliat found in the language of his time those precious merits of youth and naïveté which were above all proper to a translator of Herodotus. And in this respect he has not been surpassed by any of his successors, to whom he appears to have remained, furthermore, entirely unknown" (2).

We should also mention here the names of Baif, Amadis Jamyn, Rémy Belleau and Ronsard himself, all of whom made translations from Greek plays: but we shall again refer to these in the chapter on the *Drama*.

## II. — SCHOLARS.

**HENRI ESTIENNE** (1532-1598). — The Estienne family occupies a considerable position in the history of French learning and that of the Renaissance. *Henry Premier Estienne* founded in 1500 the printing-press which his son, *Robert Premier Estienne* (1503-1559) made so famous. Robert, besides his admirable Greek, Latin and French editions, compiled the *Thesaurus linguæ latinæ*, the first great Latin dictionary. Defended by François I against the Sorbonne, he took refuge in Geneva after the death of the king, and was converted to Calvinism in 1551.

His son, *Henri II Estienne*, was a sort of infant prodigy. He learned Latin and Greek while he played, and became the most brilliant pupil of Pierre Danès and Adrien Turnèbe; and at seventeen years of age he collated Greek texts for his father's editions. He visited the chief libraries of Italy, Flanders and England, and gathered material for his *Thesaurus linguæ græcæ*, or dictionary of the Greek language, which he published in 1572. While resting from these erudite

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 100; 2nd cycle, pp. 262-267.

(2) E. EGGER *l'Hellénisme en France*, I, 265.—Read an extract from *Saliat* in the *Morceaux choisis* by TALBOT, p. 255.

labours, he composed several works of occasion : the first being an *Apologie pour Héródote*, a sort of Introduction intended for the edition which he had published in 1566, and which is in itself a pamphlet more free-thinking than protestant. Under pretext of defending Herodotus against accusations of improbability and falsehood, Henri Estienne declared that the then present time was still more fruitful of strange events, persecutions and cruelties. He made, especially in the second part, a violent attack on the Roman Church. The tone of the work is one of excessive freedom ; and it abounds in humorous anecdotes and coarse jests. The Catholics called Estienne the “ *Pantagruel of Geneva* ”, and Geneva disavowed and banished this compromising defender.—Estienne’s other works are of a more philological character, but the style is always polemical. In his *Traité de la conformité du langage françois avec le grec* (1565), Estienne holds that, of all modern languages, French is most analogous to Greek : in the first part he tries to prove that the use of each of the parts of speech in French grammar corresponds with Greek syntax ; in the second part, he draws a parallel between French and Greek locutions ; in the third, he gives a list, not always correct, of French words from the Greek. This work, very ingenious and learned, is only the development of a grammatical paradox. More interesting, especially in its own time, was the *Précellence du langage françois*, published in 1579. It is a learned and animated defence of French against Italian, or rather against the *Italianism* which had invaded the court. Estienne makes use of sophistical reasoning, based on the foregoing paradox. This is his syllogism : 1. The Greek



PORTRAIT OF ETIENNE PASQUIER

From the print of Léonard Gaultier (1561-vers 1630).

language is the most beautiful of all ; 2. Now, French is the only modern language capable of rivalling Greek ; 3. Therefore, French is superior to Italian. and the French nation should speak French. He supports this reasoning by a host of ingenious examples which, leaving aside his polemics and his *theses*, are the work of a grammarian as skilful as he is learned.—Estienne continued in his *Précellence* the campaign he had undertaken in his *Deux Dialogues du nouveau langage françois italianisé* (1578), in which the speakers are two noble courtiers, *Philausone* (friend of Ausonie, Italy) and *Celtophile* (friend of Gaul) ; the latter is joined, in the second dialogue, by *Philalèthe* (friend of truth). In this exceedingly entertaining work Estienne attacks the fashions as well as the language of the time.

After completing his *Thesaurus*, Estienne resumed his wanderings through the libraries of Europe, dying at last, a vagabond of learning, in the hospital at Lyons, in March, 1598 (4).

**ÉTIENNE PASQUIER** (1529-1615). — Lawyer and magistrate of the first rank, Pasquier belongs to the history of literature by his *Recherches de la France* (1561-70), and by his *Lettres*.—The *Recherches* consists of nine books, in which Pasquier discusses, without any regular order, all sorts of questions relating to the institutions, customs, manners, language, monuments, etc. of ancient France. The interest of these *mêlanges*, as he himself calls them, lies in the accuracy of the information the author had gathered from the most diverse sources, libraries, manuscripts, correspondence, etc. Upon all these points, the *Recherches* is still a book to be consulted. Furthermore, it is easy reading, as Pasquier wrote in a firm and exact style, almost technical, sometimes rising to eloquent energy. In Book III, chapter XLIII, Pasquier has inserted the celebrated plea he made for the University against the Jesuits in 1565, a plea which proves at the same time the ardour of his Gallican convictions and his legal talent (2).

**CLAUDE FAUCHET** (1529-1601). — Fauchet shares with Pasquier the merit of having contributed towards saving from oblivion, in the days of the Renaissance, old French history and literature. He wrote the *Antiquités gauloises et françoises* (1579-1601), and the *Origine de la langue et de la poésie françoise* (1581). In this last work, written in the midst of the Renaissance, and just before classicism was about to overshadow the Middle Ages for more than two centuries, Fauchet bequeathed a most precious document to posterity, in which we see how an intelligent and learned man of the sixteenth century knew and judged old French poetry (3).

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 267.

(2) Extracts from *Pasquier* in the *Morceaux choisis* of DARMSTETER and HATZFELD, p. 134.—*Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 271.

(3) Extracts from *Claude Fauchet* in the *Morceaux choisis* of TALBOT, p. 176.



## III. — SCIENTIFIC WRITERS.

At the moment when a language is in process of formation the aid contributed by scientific writers is most useful. Each one, in compelling the vocabulary to express new things, develops and enriches it. Furthermore, these writers are almost always men of ardent will and profound sensibility. The savant is a poet, who, to express his ideal, and relate his researches and sufferings, often finds a mode of expression characterized by a touching and eloquent sincerity.

**BERNARD PALISSY**

(1510-1589). — Palissy deserves a place of honour in the history of the human will, and in that of letters, by his *Discours admirables de la nature des eaux et fontaines*, etc. This volume is the work of a man developed in the hard discipline of travels, labour and suffering. Who has not read the account of his laborious experiments when he sought the *secret of enamel*? But who has not been surprised sometimes, also, that the

name of this *potter* should have remained so famous? It is because the glory of Palissy lies not in having discovered an enamel, but in having sought it scientifically, and especially in having made observations in the course of his search which are those of a savant of genius.

Buffon and Cuvier both regarded him as a precursor of the greatest geological discoveries of modern times.—As for his merit as a writer, it is to be found in the energy, almost violence, of his style: there is heroism in this proud and solid prose.



PORTRAIT OF AMBROISE PARÉ

From an anonymous print of the xvi century.

**AMBROISE PARÉ** (1510-1590) was a famous surgeon attached to the French armies under Henri II, Charles IX, and Henri III, who has described his *campaigns* in a simple and lucid style. He collected his various writings in 1575 under the title *Œuvres Diverses de M. Ambroise Paré*. Nothing would be more natural in our time than that a surgeon should set forth in French the result of his researches, his methods of operating, etc. But at the end of the sixteenth century it was a bold innovation. Physicians spoke and wrote in Latin; and Paré's work aroused antagonisms which were then legitimate. He should, then, be praised for his courage, as well as for having enriched French narrative and scientific literature (1).

**OLIVIER DE SERRES** (1539-1619). — A Huguenot nobleman, Olivier de Serres, appears to have mingled as little as possible in the quarrels of his time. He loved the country passionately, and from 1573 to 1600 he scarcely ever left his beautiful estate of Pradel, in the Vivarais. It was there that, studying all the old agronomic treatises, and collating his own experiences, he composed the book which he published in 1600 under the title, *Théâtre d'agriculture et ménage des champs*. The work was dedicated to King Henri IV, who is said to have received it with the greatest favour, and had a few pages of it read to him every day after dinner. Nothing, indeed, could better have served the projects of a pacifist king who, at the end of their long fratricidal quarrels, had led his nobility to recuperate in the peace of meadows and fields. The *Théâtre d'agriculture* met with great success, and numerous editions of it were published in the first half of the seventeenth century. This success Olivier de Serres owed not only to the technical accuracy of his precepts, but also to the charm of his limpid and elegant style (2).

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(1) Extracts from *Paré* in DARMSTETER and HATZFELD, p. 165.—*Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 275.

(2) Extracts from *Olivier de Serres* in the *Morceaux choisis* of DARMSTETER and HATZFELD, p. 240;—of F. GODEFROY, p. 480; of TALBOT, p. 240.



DECORATIVE FRIEZE BY ETIENNE DELAULNE [1518 (?)–1585 (?)]

## CHAPTER VI.

### MONTAIGNE AND THE MORALISTS.

#### SUMMARY

1. **MONTAIGNE** (1533–1592), born in the château de Montaigne, Councillor to the **Parlement** of Perigueux, then of Bordeaux, published in 1580 the first two books of his *Essais*. Afterwards he travelled, visiting Germany and Italy; on his return he became Mayor of Bordeaux, and in 1588 published the third book of his *Essais*. He died before having published a new edition, much augmented, which appeared after his death under the supervision of Mlle de Gournay, in 1595.

He composed his *Essais* while reading Plutarch, Seneca and the Latin poets, and commenting upon them in the light of his own experience. His **own personality** is the essential theme of his book; but “in depicting himself, he depicted human nature.” His philosophy lies in the phrase *Que sais-je?* It is a prudent and discreet scepticism. — His **pedagogy** is above all negative. He believes in developing the **judgment** rather than the **memory**; that the child **should travel**, and practice conversation in society. This education was to form the **honnête homme** (cultivated gentleman) of the seventeenth century. — His style is impulsive and **rich in images**—the style of a poet.

2. **PIERRE CHARRON** (1541–1603) was Montaigne's most remarkable disciple. He published in 1601 his *Traité de la Sagesse*, the motto of which is : *Je ne sais*.

**GUILLAUME DU VAIR**, a celebrated magistrate and orator, represents the greatness of the stoic and the Christian. His treatise on *l'Eloquence française* ranks him with the best French critics.

## I. — MONTAIGNE (1533-1592).



DECORATED LETTER  
taken from the *Songe de*  
*Polyphile*.

ife. — Michel de Montaigne was born February 28, 1533. His family name was Eyquem, and his family had acquired fortune and notoriety in the more important commerce of Bordeaux. The château de Montaigne, situated on a hill at whose feet flows the Lidoire, an affluent of the Dordogne, was purchased by Michel's great-grandfather in 1477. His father, Pierre Eyquem, was born there in 1495, retired from trade, went to the wars in Italy, married a woman of Israelitish origin, and became Councillor to the *Cour des aides*, and Mayor of Bordeaux in 1544. We know, from the *Essais* (II, 5) that Pierre Eyquem was a serious, kindly, modest man, accomplished, even into old

age, in physical exercises. His intelligence and practical sense are evident in the method by which he made his son Michel learn Latin. The child, as soon as he could talk, was confided to a German tutor who did not know a word of French, and was obliged to use Latin exclusively in speaking to his pupil. "As for the rest of the family," wrote Montaigne, "it was an inviolable rule that neither himself, nor my mother, nor the valets, nor chambermaids should speak in my presence anything but such Latin words as each one had learned in order to talk jargon with me. . . . When I was more than ten years old I knew no more of French or *périgourdin* than I did of Arabic; and, without art, or a book, or grammar or precept, without whipping or tears, I had learned a Latin as pure as my teacher himself possessed, and which I could not have spoiled or altered." (I, 25.) But there was doubtless a certain softness in the early education of Michel; he was awakened in the morning by the sound of music, and a part of each day he was allowed to run loose with the little peasants of the neighbourhood. Consequently the child received an unhappy impression when he was placed, in the college of Guyenne at Bordeaux. In this "jail of captive youth", Michel de Montaigne remained for six years, continuing the study of Latin. He liked especially the poets Ovid, Terence, Virgil; he took an active part in the dramatic exercises, playing roles in the Latin tragedies of Buchanan and Muret. At thirteen years he entered the *Faculté des Arts* of Bordeaux, where his master was one of the most celebrated Ciceronians of the time, Marc-Antoine Muret. He read for the bar at Toulouse, was appointed Councillor to the *Cour des aides* of Périgueux, and there met La Boétie, who was two years his senior, and for whom, from the first day, he conceived a friendship which has become proverbial (I, 27).

Meanwhile, he was appointed to the Bordeaux *Parlement*, where he fulfilled

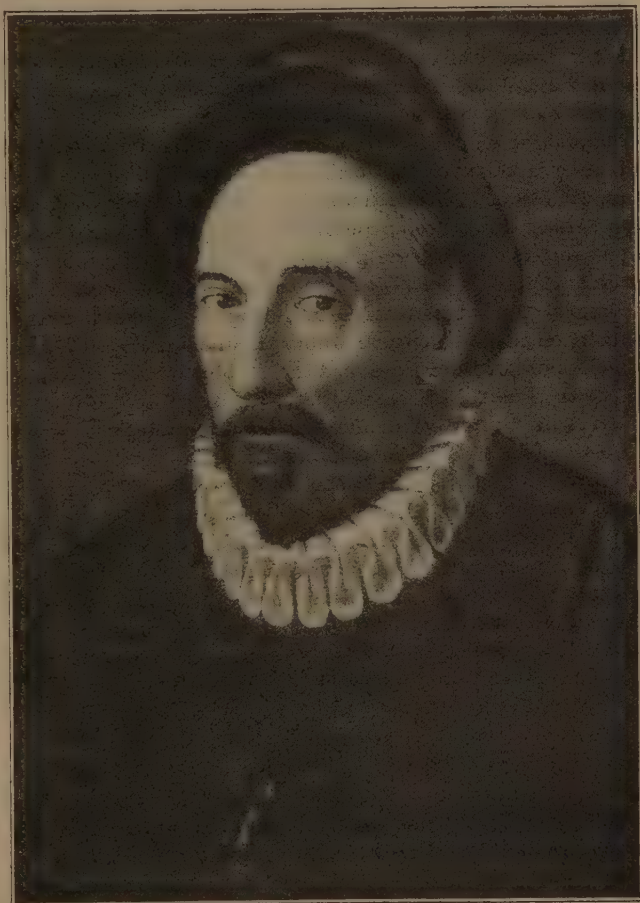


his duties nonchalantly during the sixteen years of their duration. Indeed, he went frequently to Paris, and accompanied the court to Bar-le-Duc (1561), and to Rouen (1563).

He married, in 1565, Françoise de la Chassaigne, daughter of one of his colleagues in the *Parlement*, and who proved to be the discreet and intelligent companion necessary for this restless man. Having lost his father in 1568, and being rich by inheritance as well as through his marriage, Montaigne resigned his place in the *Parlement* of Bordeaux (1570). He had now become a country nobleman, and it was towards 1571 that he began in his library that course of reading and introspection from which developed the *Essais*.

Montaigne, who had made a translation in 1569 of the *Théologie naturelle* of Raymond de Sébonde, published at Bordeaux in 1580 the first two books of his *Essais*. After this he undertook a long journey. He left his château June 22, 1580, went first to Paris,

where he presented a copy of his book to the king, thence to Plombières, where



PORTRAIT OF MONTAIGNE IN MANHOOD

From a tableau kept at the Castle of Montaigne.

he took the waters, then into Switzerland, Bavaria and the Tyrol, going into Italy by the Brenner and Trente passes, stopping a few days in Venice, and arriving finally at Rome where he remained four months. He left Rome on April 14, 1581, to take a cure at the baths "della Villa", near Lucca, and it was there that he learned of his election as Mayor of Bordeaux. After another visit to Rome, during which he received the title of *citoyen romain*, for which he had asked, he returned to France by short stages, and by November 30, 1581, he was back in his château de Montaigne.

Montaigne has left us an account of his journey, a sort of journal dictated to his *valet de chambre*, in which he speaks of himself in the third person. This journal was not published until the eighteenth century. It is rather disappointing to the reader, who expects to find more original and profound observations upon the manners of the peoples visited by the author. Upon reflection, these minute details, ironical in their trifling, are just what should be expected of the writer of the *Essais*, that penetrating observer of human contradictions. It should be added, for those whom the medical part of this journey might repel, that Montaigne never intended these notes for the public (1).

Mayor of Bordeaux (somewhat in spite of himself, if we may believe him), Montaigne for two years fulfilled his functions with exactitude and serenity. Re-elected in 1583, he soon found himself in serious difficulties, Guyenne being greatly troubled by the quarrels between the King of Navarre, the future Henri IV, and Henri III, King of France. When the pestilence broke out in 1585, Montaigne, just recovered from an illness, refused to leave his château. Doubtless, he lacked civic courage, and his too great prudence will always be contrasted with the heroism of Rotrou who returned to die at Dreux, because the duties of his office called him there. But most of Montaigne's biographers excuse him on the ground of his duties as a husband and father, and point out that he showed true stoicism in the case of La Boétie, ill of a contagious disease, and whom he helped to the last minute of her life (2). his !!!

Thenceforward, Montaigne gave up political and civil life, and shut himself once more in his library where he worked so steadily that in 1588 he was able to give the public a second edition of his *Essais* in three books, the last of which was entirely new, and the first two enlarged by six hundred additions. Montaigne went to Paris to have the volume printed, and thence to the *Etats de Blois*. After the assassination of Henri III he resisted the advances of Henri IV, whom he knew and loved, and never again left his château. There he died, as a Christian, the 13th of September, 1592, at the age of fifty-nine.

**Editions of the "Essais."** — The usual text of Montaigne, the *vulgate*, is that of 1595; this edition was published three years after the author's death by

(1) Cf. MONTAIGNE, Radouant, éd. (Hatier), pp. 239-254.

(2) Regarding this question, cf. P. BONNEFON's *Montaigne et ses amis*, I. — RADOUANT, p. 262.

Mademoiselle de Gournay, his adopted daughter, and the Bordeaux poet, Pierre de Brach, under the active and faithful supervision of Madame de Montaigne. Since the complete edition of 1588, Montaigne had, indeed, retouched, finished, overcharged the text; and he had prepared a new edition which his death had prevented him from seeing through the press himself. The municipal library at Bordeaux possesses a copy of the 1588 edition covered with additions and corrections by Montaigne's own hand; and this copy is quite different from the edition of 1595, which must have been printed from another revision now lost.—We have, therefore : 1. The edition of 1580, comprising the first text of the first two books : 2. The edition of 1588, containing the three books, and the last one printed during Montaigne's lifetime ; 3. The edition of 1595, posthumous, published from a text corrected by Montaigne himself ; 4. The Bordeaux copy (4). This bibliographical question is interesting, because an examination of the different editions enables us to follow the progress and fluctuations of Montaigne's thought.

**Principal Chapters of Montaigne.** — An analysis of the *Essais* is impossible : scarcely any chapter, taken alone, could support it. Furthermore, a choice would be difficult among these pages where all is equally attractive. We shall, then, merely point out a few chapters which must be read first of all in order to comprehend and enjoy Montaigne.

*Book I.* — In chap. viii (*De l'Oisiveté*), Montaigne tells us under what circumstances he wrote his *Essais*.—Chap. ix (*Des Menteurs*) ; he complains of his memory.—Chap. xviii (*Qu'il ne faut pas juger de notre heur [bonheur] qu'après la mort*). Allusions to the death of La Boétie.—Chap. xix (*Que philosopher, c'est apprendre à mourir*). One of his finest pieces, and one of the most characteristic of his way of composing and writing. — Chap. xxii (*De la coutume*). A full and impassioned enumeration of human contradictions, from one period to another, one people to another.—Chap. xxiii (*Divers événements de même conseil*). In this is the story of Augustus and Cinna, after Seneca.—Chap. xxiv (*Du Pédanlisme*). This is, so to speak, the negative introduction of the following chapter.—Chap. xxv (*De l'Instruction des enfants*). An unmethodical exposition of the pedagogical ideas of Montaigne, to which we shall revert later.—Chap. xxvi (*C'est folie de rapporter le vrai et le faux au jugement de notre suffisance*). This title may be cited as one of Montaigne's formulas of scepticism.—Chap. xxvii (*De l'Amitié*). Celebrated passage on La Boétie.—Chap. xxx (*Des Cannibales*). This is worth reading to know the paradoxical side of Montaigne, a real precursor of Rousseau.—Chap. xl (*Que le goût des biens et des maux dépend, en bonne partie, de l'opinion que nous en avons*). This title also is a formula. — Chap. lvi (*Des Prières*). Very interesting as showing the religious thought of Montaigne, surprising by its gravity and eloquence.

*Book II.* — Chapter ii (*De l'Ierognerie*).—Another typical chapter, and a singular and piquant mixture. It contains a portrait of his father.—Chap. iv (*A demain les affaires*). Contains a famous judgment upon Amyot's Plutarch, to be compared with that in chapter x.—Chap. vi (*De l'Exercitation*). Here Montaigne speaks much of himself, and analyses with admirable accuracy his sentiments and sensations after a fall from his horse,

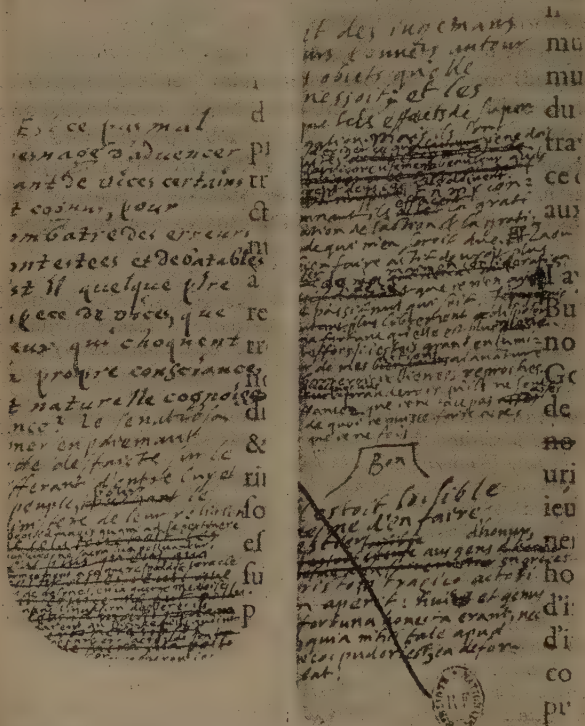
(1) The 1580 text is reproduced in the *Dezeimeris and Barchhausen* edition (Bordeaux, 1870). The 1588 text in the *Motheau and Jouaust* ed. (Paris, 1885). The 1595 text in the *Courbet and Royer* ed. (Paris, 1872). The Bordeaux text in the *Strowsky* ed. (Bordeaux, 1906)—Cf. RADOUANT, p. 268 et 362.

and a swoon.—Chapter x (*Des Livres*). A series of judgments upon his reading. Very important.—Chap. xii (*Apologie de Raymond de Sébonde*). The “arsenal” of Montaigne’s

sceptical arguments; it was upon this that Pascal founded the negative part of his *Apologie*, and it is chiefly by this chapter that he judged Montaigne in the *Entretien* with M. de Sacy. The student should read Saint-Beuve’s analysis in his *Port-Royal*, Book II, correcting it by M. Faguet’s study in his *Seizième siècle* and that of M. Radouant (1).—Chap. xvii (*De la Présomption*). Montaigne here speaks of his style, his method, his habits, his physical and moral self: it is one of the most important chapters of his autobiography. At its close he tells us something of his adopted daughter, Marie de Gournay.—Chap. xxxii (*Défense de Sénèque et de Plutarque*).

Book III. — Chap. ii (*Du Repentir*). Montaigne here talks of his sincerity, and of the manner in which he claims to portray himself.—Chap. iii (*De Trois Commerces*). This chapter is also essential to the analysis of the author’s character. In this, he complacently describes his library.—Chap. v (*Sur des vers de Virgile*). This is one of the longest in the book, as well as one in which he

speaks the most sincerely of himself and his style.—Chap. viii (*De l’Art de conférer*). The word *conférence* here means conversation. This chapter should be compared with



Corrections placed over showing the variations in Montaigne’s writing.

Annulled corrections.

FRAGMENTS OF THE EXEMPLAR OF THE *Essais*, KEPT AT BORDEAUX  
Extracts from Strowski, the *Essais*, municipal edition.

(1) R. RADOUANT, *Montaigne, œuvres choisies* (Hatier), pp. 171-203.

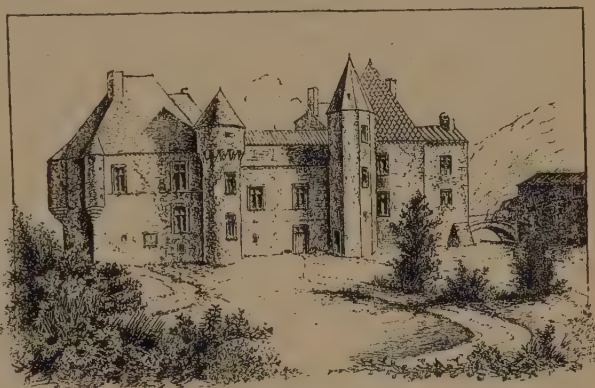


La Bruyère's on *La Société et la Conversation*.—Chap. XIII (*De l'Expérience*). Here we find, in a way, the Epicurian conclusions of the *Essais* (1).

**How Montaigne composed the "Essais."** — It was not, in fact, by any coherent plan, or even to develop a philosophical theory drawn up in advance, that Montaigne wrote the *Essais*. Even the title of the book proves it. *Essais*, what does the word mean, if not groping, oscillating, retouching, an absence of design and object, and the impossibility of classifying or labeling?

Montaigne shut himself up in his château for the first time from 1571 to 1580. He had a taste for books, and he read. He resorted by preference to the moralist and historians, and as he was not a passive reader, the critical spirit awoke in him: he thought and judged. To judge, he compared. The point of comparison which was necessary he found, not in a philosophical or theological doctrine, the principles of which would determine his decisions, but in himself, the natural man in himself. We easily imagine that he must have been contented on many days to follow listlessly the capricious wanderings of his thought without writing a word, that then he transcribed, for his collection, a few anecdotes from Plutarch, a few maxims from Seneca; then, as he had his pen in his hand, he could not resist noting, alongside of these extracts, first, relations and comparisons, and soon his own personal reflections. He acquired a taste for this game, and the texts of the ancient authors became merely a pretext. Thus he began unconsciously to write his psychological memoirs, but as an *honnête homme qui ne se pique de rien*, as a conversationalist who denies he is writing a book, who seeks no artificial frame to enshrine his thoughts, and who rather avoids than otherwise all the ancient and modern precepts on the art of writing, because it would be a constraint and would deform his work. Thus were formed, day by day, the first two books of the *Essais*.

Montaigne then travelled, and returned, having visited *pays estranges*. He had



MONTAIGNE'S CASTLE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE XIX CENTURY  
Extract from P. Bonnefon. *Montaigne, l'homme et l'œuvre*.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*. 1st cycle, pp. 95-100; —2nd cycle, pp. 206-220.

"rubbed and filed his brain against others." He became first magistrate of a rich and populous city, and his experience widened and deepened. During what leisure his office left him, and above all when he was freed from it altogether, with what pleasure he shut himself into his tower! Reading and re-reading, he reviewed what he had already written; he completed, strengthened and confirmed, and he foresaw future subjects and chapters. It was the edition in three volumes which resulted from this second period of retreat. It seems that, after 1388 Montaigne, having expressed in the strength of his maturity the whole subject of his thought, would not have to return again to the work which he had "mortgaged to the public."

Yet, again he revised this work; and, as at the approach of old age many things appear that have not previously occurred to the mind, so Montaigne made further additions, and prepared the new edition which he himself was never to see. More sceptical perhaps, but especially more wise, he considered that the necessity for being moderate and tolerant cannot be too strongly proved to men. So he accumulated quotations and anecdotes, because he did not wish to be believed solely on his own word, and he supported his reflections with the greatest possible amount of testimony.

Thus, while Rabelais published at long intervals the different parts of his work, without modifying the preceding instalments, Montaigne, as long as he continued to work, returned twice to his first two books, and corrected the third.

**Montaigne's Object.** — What unity could a book possess, of which we could not say that it was composed at all? This "ill-joined marquetry," several times retouched, and overcharged with "supernumerary emblems," would it give to a reader who after amusing himself at length with the details should then consider the work as a whole and from a slight distance, the impression of a balanced and harmonious *motif*? Montaigne himself answers us:

First, in the short Introduction which he addresses *To the Reader*, he says: "This is a book of good faith, reader. It warns thee at the beginning that I had no object, other than domestic and private... I wish to be seen in my simple, natural everyday way, without study and artifice; *for it is I that I depict... I am myself the subject of my book...*" — Elsewhere he says (I, 8): "Lately, when I retired to my home, determined, so far as I could, to do nothing but pass, in repose and apart, the short span of life which remains to me, it seemed to me that I could not confer greater favour upon my soul than to leave it in complete idleness to its own *entertainment and self-absorption...*" — And again (II, 10): "This is purely the effort of my natural, not my acquired, faculties... Who seeks learning, let him seek her where she lodges. There is nothing that I make less profession of: here you will find merely my fancies, by which I do not try to make you understand things, but myself..." — In Chapter XVII of the same



It is the same with the *individualism* of Montaigne as with all the great romanticists. Montaigne tells us: "Each man represents in himself all humanity" (III, 2). And the modern poet says: "Fool, who think that I am not you!" Not every writer can make a book that is at once very personal and universal; nor is everyone capable of thinking and feeling with all and for all. Of this type, Montaigne, Chateaubriand and Musset are rare examples.

**Montaigne's Philosophy.** — What result did Montaigne achieve by this inquest upon himself and all humanity?—It is not surprising that a book as loosely made as the *Essais* should have been the subject of various interpretations. Montaigne himself seems to have begun by being a *dilettante* who was to become little by little a sceptic and an epicurian (1). It might be said that at first he amused himself with human contradictions, and that later he systematized them—if the word *system* is not inconsistent with his free method.

His scepticism is essentially based on the statement that man is a fluid being, "undulating and diverse," incapable of attaining to truth: neither *science*, *reason* nor *philosophy* can guide him. He yields to *custom*, to *prejudices*, to *interest*, to *fanaticism*; he is the plaything of external circumstances, and of his own impressions. This case against man, elements of which are disseminated throughout the *Essais*, develops into an ardent and almost coherent plea in the famous chapter XII of Book II, the *Apologie de Raymond de Sébonde*, and of which Sainte-Beuve has made such a searching analysis in Book II of his *Port-Royal*. It is true that this chapter ends with a somewhat unexpected Christian conclusion, and that it will always be accused of being either not quite sincere or not quite logical. The general impression, however, which Montaigne leaves upon a reader who has read and re-read him, is less that of a true sceptic, who takes pleasure in destroying certitude, and amuses himself maliciously with human foolishness and weakness, like Voltaire, than that of a very intelligently moderate man who, at a period when everyone announced "I know!" and anathematized or killed his neighbour for forcing his own belief upon him, murmured softly: "What do I know?" Every extreme and peremptory opinion wounded him. The greater part of his *truths* are for him but *conjectures*; he invites us above all to suspend our judgment. And the engraving of a balance on the frontispiece of the *Essais* is less an emblem of doubt than of equity.

On the other hand, Montaigne is an epicurian; like Rabelais he has taken the part of nature against discipline. Beside his *What do I know?* he, too, could have written, *Fais ce que voudras*. In the last chapters of his *Essais* he gives us, concerning this point, formulas which probably contain the whole of his thought. There he says: "The more simply we commit ourselves to nature, so is it the more wisely. Oh! what a soft and healthful bed is made of ignorance and incuriousness, whereon to repose a well-balanced head... Let nature alone a

(1) F. BRUNETIÈRE, *Hist. de la litt. franç. classique*, I, 614.—Cf. RADOUANT, pp. 29, 265.



while; she understands our affairs better than we" (III, 43). And again: "We cannot fail if we follow nature: the sovereign precept is to conform ourselves to her."—Seeing how he insists above all upon the necessity of living in and for oneself, and how he seeks to detach man from all that might trouble him, we recognize in Montaigne less a continuer than a contradictor of Rabelais. Both, indeed, preach a return to nature; but Rabelais seeks to free us from constraint and tradition only to increase our energy and make us hunger for learning and activity; whereas Montaigne leads us to nature as to the hidden source of all moderation and tranquillity.

However it may be, Montaigne was held in suspicion by Pascal, Bossuet, Malebranche—all those who, recognizing that man is feeble and vicious, seek to correct and discipline him; whereas, he is the accepted master of the illustrious sceptics the free thinkers of the seventeenth century, of Bayle, Voltaire, the encyclopaedists, and the rationalists of the nineteenth century. Among those who believe in progress, and have worked for it with all their strength, there is some misunderstanding of Montaigne mingled with their admiration; but they have loved in him the ironical and implacable destroyer, he who said: "The curse of mankind is being sure they know," and who, in ruining *dogmatism*, prepared the way for liberal modern thought.



PORTRAIT OF MADEMOISELLE DE GOURNAY  
From the print of Matheus.

**Montaigne's Pedagogy.** — Not even in the domain of pedagogy must we

expect a *system* from Montaigne. We should rather expect a critical discussion of the abuses of his time, and a few counsels for avoiding them, but no *program*.

1<sup>o</sup> Montaigne condemns the pursuit of learning for its own sake, both in connection with the instruction of children and in every department of life. "I should say that as plants are choked with too much humour and lamps with an excess of oil, so is the action of the brain clogged by too much study and too much matter". (I, 26).—As to learning, children absorb it entirely by means of *memory*. "We work only to fill up the memory, leaving the understanding and the consciousness empty..." (I, 24). "To know by heart is not to know... An unfortunate sufficiency is this mere book-stuffing..." (I, 25).—Montaigne criticises energetically *scholastic discussion*, thanks to which, instead of reasoning according to the laws of reason and of common sense, the one idea is to apply formulas. (Concerning this, see especially the chapter on *l'Art de Conférer*) (III, 8).—He forbids punishment: "You hear (in the schools) only the cries of suffering children, and of masters drunken with anger. What a way in which to awaken in these tender and timid souls an appetite for their lessons, by guiding them there with a distorted visage and the hands armed with whips! How much more decent to strew their class-rooms with flowers and leaves, than with blood-stained fragments of osier!" (I, 25). So much for the *negative* part of his pedagogy.

2<sup>o</sup> What result does he propose, and what method by which to reach it? He would first of all form the *judgment*, learning being used merely as an *instrument*. "What we gain by study, is to become by its means better and wiser" (I, 25). "We must inquire who is best instructed, not who is most instructed." (I, 24).—He would then ask for the child a teacher "whose head should be better balanced than filled, and that though morals and understanding and learning should all be required, yet more of morals and understanding than of science" (I, 25). This teacher would give his pupil object lessons especially; he would compel him to examine and discern. "I should not wish him to talk alone, but likewise to listen to his pupil... It is good to make his pupil walk before him in order to judge of his paces..." (I, 25).—The child should be taken into society, "in the school of Social intercourse" (I, 25), everywhere exciting him to express his opinion. He would be taught, by practice, *l'Art de Conférer* (III, 8).—It would soon be necessary to enlarge the sphere of his experience, first by *reading*, then by *travel*. Montaigne's favourite authors in general were historians and moralists, that is to say, those who teach us something of the intimate side of man, or of man living with his fellow-men: especially Plutarch, Seneca, Tacitus, Commynes; and among the poets: Terence, Horace, Virgil and Ovid. The child would travel, not to see useless *curiosities*, "but to gather chiefly a knowledge of the humours and manners of different nations, and to rub and file his own brain against those of others" (I, 25).

3<sup>d</sup> But, "it is not enough to stiffen his soul; his muscles must also be stiffened" (I, 25). The child should learn not only everything which a young nobleman should know, horsemanship, fencing, dancing, etc., but also how to fortify himself in advance against all physical ills; and to accomplish this he should not be left in the care of his parents, who are always frightened by the least excess and disposed to protect him against every dangerous experiment.

The advantages to be gained by such a method would be to form a man with an open mind and equitable judgment, an easy conversationalist, of distinguished bearing, and with a robust character under elegance of manners; in short, the "honnête homme" of the seventeenth century, as he is defined by the Chevalier de Méré and by La Rochefoucauld. But this man of the world, charming in a drawing-room and stoical on the battle-field, risks being in private life, as son, husband and father, only a prudent egotist.



Voicy du grand Montaigne une entière figure  
 Le Peintre a peinct le corps, et luy son bel esprit.  
 Le premier par son art égale la Nature  
 Mais l'autre la surpasse en tout ce qu'il escrit.  
 Thomas de Leu, fecit.

PORTRAIT OF MONTAIGNE IN HIS OLD AGE  
 From the print of Thomas de Leu.

### Montaigne's Style.—

There are two essential qualities in this style: it is *impulsive* and full of *imagery*: Montaigne is one of the most *spontaneous* writers in French literature, and always with success. The movement of his sentences is lively, capricious and unexpected. Faguet says: "It is an animated and gay style of conversation, somewhat teasing and paradoxical at times. Reading it, we seem to hear light, clear laughter, the voice



rising in repartee, and the light touch-and-go of speech on some favorite subject. Montaigne wished his thought to leap from his brain to the paper in the same movement that gave it birth. This result is never obtained by giving free play to one's pen, but, on the contrary, finding again, by reflection, the first gesture of his springing thought. He succeeded marvellously; and in this respect, he



PORTRAIT OF PIERRE CHARRON

From the stamp of Léonard Gaultier (1561. † vers 1630).

possesses, as a writer, real dramatic powers (4).”—Furthermore, this style is as rich in imagery as that of a poet, a real poet, who does not plaster his images over abstractions, but who thinks in images and *sees* all that he imagines. But in spite of the variety and abundance of metaphors, which often follow each other without connection, we are never fatigued by it as we are for instance, by the style of Michelet. We seem to be walking in a garden full of flowers which indeed spring up here and there somewhat at random, but whose colours and perfume unite most harmoniously.

## II. — AFTER MONTAIGNE.

**PIERRE CHARRON** (1541-1603).—Son of a Paris bookseller, and at first destined for the bar, Pierre Charron studied law sedulously at Orléans and Bour-

(1) EMILE FAGUET, *Seizième siècle*, p. 417.

(2) “D’azur semé de trefles d’or, à une patte de lion de même, armée de gueule, mise en fasces.”



The *Sagesse* of Pierre Charron is divided into three books : " The first book ", wrote the author himself, " is of the *knowledge of oneself* and of the human condition which prepares one for wisdom ; the second contains the description, *Offices (devoirs), Règles générales et principales de la sagesse* ; the third contains the rules and special instructions for wisdom, through the four principal moral virtues *prudence, justice, force and tempérance...* " We are

struck, in merely reading this plan, by the fact that this friend and disciple of Montaigne is *methodical and didactic*. Not infrequently he even introduces synoptical tables into his expositions. But, despite appearances, he is a real disciple of Montaigne, who develops the suggestions of his master. The latter said *Que sais-je ?* Charron says: *Je ne sais.*" It is not clear that Charron was really a sceptic. Should he be called, with Father Garasse, the *patriarche des esprits forts* ? Must it be admitted that Charron only wished to undermine human reason in order to show the absolute necessity for a revealed religion ? Quite possible. This would be the same plan as

Pascal's, though executed with suspicious awkwardness. At any rate, the *free-thinkers* pounced upon this treatise by a priest and preacher, whom they took pleasure in convicting of inconsistency.

Among such of Charron's chapters as still retain a certain interest, we may note those which deal with the *Devoirs des parents et des enfants* (III, 14). In the history of pedagogy Charron retains his place between Rabelais and Montaigne, on one hand, and Rousseau and Locke on the other (1).



PORTRAIT OF GUILLAUME DU VAIR

From the print of Léonard Gaultier (1561,  $\frac{1}{2}$  vers 1630).

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 220.

**GUILLAUME DU VAIR** (1556-1621).—At first councillor to the *Parlement* of Paris, Guillaume du Vair, during the troubles of the Ligue, belonged to the moderate party along with de Harlay, de Brisson and the authors of the *Satyre Ménippée*. After the day of the Barricades he pronounced a courageous harangue against the partisans of the Duke de Guise. In 1593, while a Deputy from Paris to the States of the Ligue, he protested eloquently, in his speech *On the Salique law*, against the manœuvres of those who prepared the accession of a Spanish princess to the throne of France. Henri IV appointed du Vair first president of the *Parlement* of Provence, at Aix, and the Queen regent, Marie de Medicis, made him Keeper of the Seals. While holding this office he delivered more remarkable discourses.

But we have especially to do with du Vair as a moralist. He wrote, between those stormy meetings at which he displayed his brilliant eloquence, a treatise *De la constance et consolation ès calamités publiques*, which by its dialogue form and the slightly oratorical beauty of its style, may be compared with Cicero's *Tusculanæ* or *Academicæ*. But this treatise also suggests comparison with Bossuet: du Vair has drawn in it a picture of the greatest revolutions, which reminds one of the *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*.—In another treatise, *La Sainte Philosophie*, du Vair tries to establish harmony between faith and reason. Du Vair was not a disciple of Montaigne; he represents, rather, with a kind of Christian and Stoical grandeur, the state of men who were involved in the affairs of their time, and were anxious to fortify, amid so many troubles, the hearts and minds of their fellow citizens.

Du Vair was a remarkable writer who, by the amplitude and rhythm of his style, was a true predecessor of Balzac the letter-writer. He was always an orator, even in his moral treatises; and he left one work: *De l'Éloquence française et des raisons pourquoi elle est restée si basse*, which does honour to his critical powers, and brings him into comparison with Cicero, author of *Brutus*, and with Fénelon, author of the *Lettre à l'Académie*. And this reminds us that du Vair knew Malherbe intimately, when the latter was still feeling his way in Provence: Du Vair gave him excellent advice; and, to a certain extent, must be attributed to the author of the *Éloquence française* the sure taste and the style, more oratorical than poetic, of the first theorist upon classical poetry.

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BOTTOM OF LAMP

By Etienne Delaune [1548 (?) - 1585 (?)].



DECORATIVE FRIEZE BY ETIENNE DELAUNE [1518 (?) - 1585 (?) ]

## CHAPTER VII.

### DRAMA IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

#### SUMMARY

1. **TRAGEDY.** — In the colleges **Latin** tragedies are played; **French** translations of Italian and Greek tragedies are played.

2. **ETIENNE JODELLE** publishes in 1552 the first original French tragedy; his *Cléopâtre* is acted at the college de Boncour.—In this work, taken from Plutarch, are already found the essential elements of classical tragedy. Among his contemporaries should be mentioned **JEAN DE LA PÉRUSE**, **JACQUES GRÉVIN**, etc.

At the same time the theory of tragedy is formulated by **JULES-CÉSAR SCALIGER** in 1561.

3. **ROBERT GARNIER**, magistrate, composes seven tragedies, which already possess the "*Cornélien*" accent, and the most celebrated of which are *Porcie* (1568), *Cornélie* (1574) and *Les Juives* (1580). The style is oratorical and fiery.

4. **MONTCHRESTIEN** published at the end of the century several tragedies written in a more simple and easy style, among others: *Sophonisbe*, *Aman*, and *L'Ecossaise* or *Marie Stuart*.

5. **COMEDY.**—Comedy begins with translations from Aristophanes, Terence and Plautus. But the farce continues to develop and is soon combined with these imitations of the ancients to produce true French comedy. To this must be added the very strong influence of Italy.

**JODELLE** publishes, besides his *Cléopâtre*, a farce in verse, *Eugène*, in 1552; **RÉMY BELLEAU**, the *Reconnue*, in verse (1577); **JACQUES GRÉVIN**, the *Trésorière*, in verse (1558).

In prose, the most remarkable author is **PIERRE LARIVEY**, born in France, of an Italian father. He published twelve comedies adapted from the Italian, but informed with the French spirit. Of these the most famous is *Les Esprits* (1579), several incidents of which Molière imitated in his *Avare*.





DECORATED LETTER  
of the xvi century.

THE second half of the sixteenth century and the first years of the seventeenth form, for the drama, a somewhat obscure period of transition. A thorough study of the origin of classic tragedy, or the transformations of comedy, would belong to the domain of erudition; and we shall limit ourselves here to pointing out the principal authors and the fundamental theories.

## I. — TRAGEDY.

**Latin Tragedies.**—While *Mysteries* were still being represented, especially in the provinces, the humanists of the colleges, disdainful of these crude entertainments composed and played Latin tragedies. So, at the college of Bordeaux, about 1540, Buchanan's tragedies, *Jean-Baptiste* and *Jephthé* were given (1); and in 1544 Muret's *Jules César* (2). The students were the actors, and the spectators their masters and fellow-students; and the notabilities of the city must have been proud to be present to demonstrate their "humanisme." "I have played the parts (from the age of twelve)," says Montaigne, "of the chief characters in the Latin tragedies of Buchanan, Guerento and Muret, which were given in our college of Guienne with much dignity" (I, 23).

**Italian Tragedies.**—Italian influence upon all the genres was so powerful in the sixteenth century, that it seems proper to point out Italian attempts at classic tragedy—at least the *Sophonisbe* of Trissino, played in 1516 and published in 1524. Mellin de Saint-Gelais caused a translation of this piece to be acted in 1548, and we may say at once that the first French tragedy, *classical* both in matter and manner, was also to be a *Sophonisbe* by Jean de Mairet in 1634.

**The First French Tragedies.**—Before Jodelle, we should mention two translations in French verse, by Lazare de Baïf; *Electre* (1537), and *Hécube* (1544); an *Hécube*, by Bouchetal (1545), and *Iphigénie à Aulis* by Thomas Sibilet (1549). A few of these pieces were given in the colleges; but they were only translations, and the first original French tragedy was Jodelle's *Cléopâtre* (1552).

**ÉTIENNE JODELLE** (1532-1573).—Little is known of the brief life of

(1) BUCHANAN (1506-1582), of Scottish birth, was a professor at the college of Guienne at Bordeaux and taught Montaigne. After 1547 he travelled, returned to England, and mixed in political quarrels.

(2) MURET (1526-1585), was also one of Montaigne's masters at Bordeaux; he afterwards taught in Paris (at Cardinal Lemoine's College), and at Toulouse and Rome. He was a Latinist, as correct as he was elegant. He left numerous commentaries on Latin authors.

Jodelle. His contemporaries praised his ardent and audacious genius, and Agrippa d'Aubigné wrote the following epitaph :

" Le ciel avait mis en Jodelle  
Un esprit tout autre qu'humain ;  
La France lui nia le pain,  
Tant elle fut mère cruelle."

It seems, in fact, that Etienne Jodelle died in the greatest poverty. At court he had filled the position of master of revels and pageants under Henri II ; Catherine de Médicis patronised him, but Charles IX appears to have forgotten him, for the poet addressed to him, from his death bed, a sonnet ending thus : *Qui se sert de la lampe, au moins de l'huile y met*. It is stated that he was persecuted both by Catholics and Protestants because of his religious indifference.

The only well-known episode in this rather obscure life is the representation of *Cléopâtre*, followed by that of *Eugène*. *Cléopâtre* was played, in 1552, first in the courtyard of the hôtel of Reims, and then at the college of Boncour.

Etienne Pasquier has left this record : "*Cléopâtre* was played before King Henri II, amidst great applause by the whole company, and since then, again at the collège of Boncour, where all the windows were as though tapestried with an infinity of great personages, and the courtyard so full of students that the doors of the college were overflowing. I speak as one who was present, in the same room with the great Turnebus (Adrien Turnèbe) (1)..." And Brantôme tells us, for his part, that "The king gave him (Jodelle) five hundred crowns from his treasury, and many other honours, inasmuch as this was a new thing, and very beautiful and rare (2)." The actors were : Jodelle himself, who, being only twenty years old, played the part of *Cléopâtre* ; Rémy Belleau, Jean de la Péruse, Jacques Grévin and Nicolas Denisot. After the play, Jodelle's friends and fellow-students organised in his honour a sort of *Bacchic triumph* ; the company went to Arcueil, where they walked in procession with a goat crowned with flowers and ivy, all singing the *pæan*. An echo of this pagan feast was heard as far as Geneva, where Théodore de Bèze accused Ronsard of impiety and idolatry ; to which Ronsard replied in one of his *Discours*. An anagram was made of Jodelle's name : *Io, le Délieu est né !* In short, the enthusiasm of the humanists and the erudite was at its height.

**Cléopâtre.**—Though the subject was taken from Plutarch, this was a genuinely original work, and not a cast from an antique tragedy. Thin as it is, and laborious in style, it may still be said that it contains the germ of the essential character of classic tragedy, that is, *the depiction of a moral crisis, done as nearly*

(1) ETIENNE PASQUIER, *Recherches de la France*.

(2) BRANTÔME, *Grands capitaines français* (Henri II.)

as possible just before its close, and ending in death. If we add to this the unities of time and place, the social station of the characters, the role played by *confidants*, the sustained tone of a style, noble in spite of its weakness, we shall recognise in *Cléopâtre* the first sketch of a genre which, with varying fortune, was to occupy the French stage for more than two centuries. The versification alone had not yet found its balance: the First Act of *Cléopâtre* is written in Alexandrines with feminine rhymes; the fourth in Alexandrines with mixed masculine and feminine rhymes; Acts II, III and V are in decasyllabic verse. The choruses, numerous and well placed, are in various stanzas.

Let any reader who wishes to see to what extent the French spirit in tragedy tended towards the simplification of the *subject* in order to center attention on the psychological analysis, make a comparison between Jodelle's *Cléopâtre* and Shakespeare's drama of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Both poets borrowed from the same source, Plutarch's *Life of Caesar*. But while the English dramatist made use of all the resources of his model, giving admirable relief

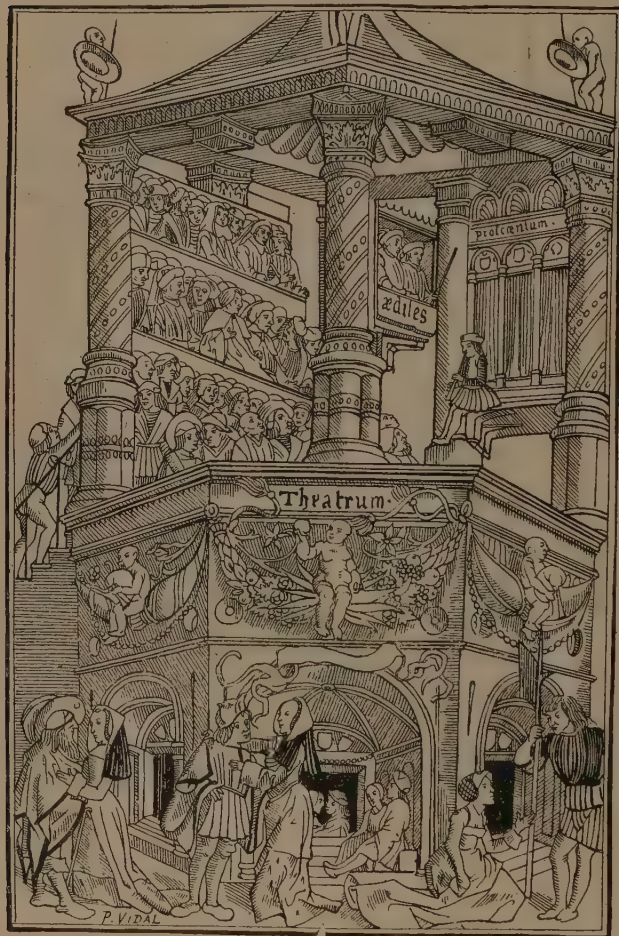
to the character of Antony as soldier and lover, to bring out more strongly the characters of Cleopatra and Octavius, the young "inventor" of French tragedy had instinctively the idea of "making something out of nothing," and commenced his piece *after the death of Antony*! Though Antony indeed appears in Scene I of the First Act, it is only his ghost which speaks. Then *Cléopâtre*, declares to her two confidants, *Eras* and *Charmion*, that she has seen Antony in a dream, and that she will die free in order to rejoin him. A philosophical and moral chorus ends the First Act.—In the Second, *Octavien* appears, accompanied by two



PORTRAIT OF ETIENNE JODELLE  
From an anonymous print of the xvi century.

of his officers, *Proculée* and *Agrippa*; and *Octavién* talks with them concerning the fate reserved for *Cléopâtre*. Following *Agrippa's* advice, he inclines towards clemency. Chorus.

—The Third Act brings *Cléopâtre* and *Octavién* together. The queen asks of him her life, for herself and her children; she will surrender her wealth. *Octavién* consents. This long scene is enlivened by the betrayal of *Séleuque*, who reveals to *Octavién* that *Cléopâtre* is hiding the greater part of her wealth, and draws upon himself *Cléopâtre's* fury and blows. This Act also terminates in a chorus concerning the courage of the queen. In the Fourth Act *Cléopâtre* declares she will die; *Eras* and *Charmion* will die with her. The chorus weeps over the queen's destiny, and describes the sacrifice she will make upon the tomb of *Antony*.—Fifth



A ROMAN THEATRE

Such as was represented in the time of Louis XII.

From a printing on wood of *Térence de Josse Bade*.

comes to describe her death. The last song of the chorus concerns the glory *Cléopâtre* has won by her courageous death, and the triumph of *César*.



This rapid analysis shows that all the processes of tragedy, if not practiced, were without doubt indicated by Jodelle: the appearance in succession of the two protagonists; their characters once understood, by means of confidential scenes, they are brought into contact; *Cléopâtre* deliberates with *Eras* and *Charmion*; *Oclavien* deliberates with *Proculée* and *Agrippa*; one of the characters, *Oclavien*, undergoes continuous progressive development: he hesitates concerning *Cléopâtre's* fate, he reasons, decides upon her pardon, and persists in that; *Cléopâtre* first wishes to die, then asks for her life, and again decides upon death; this death, which we might suppose a young student like Jodelle would have wished to use for scenic effects, we do not see at all; we only know about it by hearsay, and the *impréssion* it produces upon *Proculée*, *Oclavien* and the chorus.—Again, leaving aside its weakness, and the childishness of its execution, it is essentially classic tragedy.



A BALLET AT THE COURT OF HENRY III IN 1581  
From a printing of the xvi century.

The ballets in music of the xvi century are the origin of the Opera in France. The hall where they were given was carried there with the same galleries, and scenery, when a tragedy should be represented.

The success, too, of this schoolboy effort, not only among his masters and fellow students, but with the social world, proves that Jodelle had struck the right cord. Encouraged by this success, he composed a second tragedy, which was not played, but is an example of equal value: *Didon se sacrifiant*. Again it was a tragic death, and the death of a woman, as if he had felt instinctively that love and jealousy are sentiments more impassioned and more susceptible to *psychological variations* in woman than in man. He borrowed his subject, not from an historian but from an epic poet, Virgil. The action begins as nearly as possible before the end, at the moment, in fact, when nothing remains but *Didon's* despair: and this time it is not sufficient, because the resolution of *Enée* is taken before the curtain rises, and no episode either enables us to hope or fear that he will yield to the importunities of her whom he abandons. Jodelle contents himself with following Virgil's text, puts interminable stanzas into the mouth of *Didon* and invents nothing which might give interest, from the dramatic point of view, to the too passive *Enée* (1).—*Didon*, very inferior to *Cléopâtre* in its action and characters, is however better written; and Jodelle employs in this play only the Alexandrine, with masculine and feminine rhymes.

**Jodelle's Contemporaries.**—Among the poets who followed the movement begun by Jodelle, should be mentioned: **Jean de la Péruse**, author of a *Médée* imitated from Seneca (1553); **Jacques Grévin**, who published about 1560 a *Mort de César*, after Muret's *Julius Cæsar* in Latin; **Jean de la Taille**, who published in 1562 *Saül le Furieux*, a tragedy taken from the Bible; and in 1573 *La Famine ou les Gabaonites*;—His brother, **Jacques de la Taille**, who died at the age of twenty, without being able to justify the serious expectations caused by his first efforts, and who wrote *Didon* in 1560 (now lost), and *Daire* (Darius) and *Alexandre* between 1560 and 1562. In addition there was a host of other poets, authors of tragedies sometimes antique, sometimes Biblical (2). They were all chiefly influenced by Seneca, whose philosophical tragedies, full of powerful, brilliant, declamatory characteristics satisfied so well the didactic taste of these college poets and humanist audiences.—At the same time Italian influence developed in France the genre of the *pastoral*: Tasso's *Aminta* was produced in 1574; the *Pastor Fido* by Guarini in 1585; and **Nicolas de Montreux** introduced this genre to the French stage.

**Theories concerning the Development of Tragedy.**—Before coming to Jodelle's most remarkable successor, Robert Garnier, let us inquire if nascent French tragedy already had its *poetic system*, and if the poets named above were already, from this time, guided or fettered by rules. The first theorist upon

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 223.

(2) We should mention: DESMAZURES, author of *David* (1566); PIERRE MATHIEU, who published *Esther* (1585) and *Aman* (1589), and who, in the same year, handled a contemporary subject in the *Guisade*.

French tragedy was **Jules-César Scaliger**. Born in Italy, the fatherland of the humanities, and brought into France by the Bishop of Agen, whose physician he was, Scaliger is less famous than his son Joseph-Juste, a philologist and grammarian, whose learning was as accurate as it was extensive. But Jules-César has the credit of having first formulated the rules for classic tragedy in 1561, a hundred years before Boileau, as Lintilhac has very justly observed. It was he who, whether right or wrong, drew from Aristotle's *Poetica* the three unities, and who defined tragedy thus: *the portrayal in action of an illustrious destiny, with an unfortunate denouement, written in a serious style in verse*. It was he who required that the action should be taken up as nearly as possible before its culmination, and that the author should throw himself in *medias res*. Finally, from all his theories resulted the general principle of *probability*, which established a complete contradiction between old and new drama.—Jean de la Taille published, in 1572, as a Preface to his tragedy *Saül*, an *Art de la Tragédie*, in which he developed and completed Scaliger's precepts.

Why did these theories meet with such signal success unless it was that they were conceived at the right moment in the evolution of tragedy? In fact, it is not necessary to know if the three unities were or were not in Aristotle; the name and authority of Aristotle would have exercised no influence if the genre, so early prepared, had not spontaneously appeared by a sort of principle of selection, like anything which adapts itself to its milieu. Classic tragedy was born of a college performance and a pedant's *Poétique*, like a weed between two paving stones. But the ancient genres had in vain endeavoured to survive; though, others, such as the *pastoral* and the *irregular drama*, sent forth more vigorous shoots, tragedy alone, humble though it was, developed and flourished.

**ROBERT GARNIER** (1534-1590).—For the moment, tragedy remained merely a *scholastic* and *bookish* genre. The greatest tragic poet of the sixteenth century achieved only a reading success; but the editions became more numerous until about 1620, and it might be said that the public, in reading Garnier, was preparing itself to witness Mairet's tragedies, and then Corneille's.

Robert Garnier, born at La Ferté-Bernard, advocate to the Paris *Parlement*, *lieutenant criminel* at Le Mans, was one of those intellectually accomplished magistrates produced in such numbers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These *Chief Magistrates* were usually historians or critics, or, if they rhymed, it was in translations or imitations of Horace and Martial. But Garnier was a tragic poet. Like the great Corneille, it was by the study of law that he prepared himself for the *debates* of the stage; like the author of *Cinna*, he came from a country celebrated for its litigious character; and it would seem that tragedy had found in him the *orator* and *disputant* for which it waited; for tragedy lived by chicanery and *logic* before it lived by psychology.



This predecessor of Corneille left seven tragedies: *Porciè* (1568), *Hippolyte* (1573), *Cornélie* (1574) (1), *Marc-Antoine*, *La Troade* (1578), *Antigone ou la Piété* (1579), *Sédécie ou les Juives* (1580) (2). The influence of Seneca preponderates in all these pieces. *Eloquence*, or more often, *declamation*, abounds with a readiness

which might be pardoned to the grand style of the writer. But the most original, and we might say most unexpected, characteristic of Garnier's tragedies, lies in the fact that the action is much less *simple* than in the greater part of contemporary pieces. Compare *Marc-Antoine* to the *Cléopâtre* of Jodelle (which is the same subject); the interest is lost somewhat by being divided among the three characters, *Cléopâtre*, *Octave* and *Antoine*. The only unity in *Antigone* lies in the presence of the daughter of Oedipus in several episodes, any one of which could be in itself a tragedy. And *La Troade* assembles all the misfortunes which befel Queen *Hécube*. This overfull complexity, in too narrow a frame, is another point of resemblance between Garnier and Corneille.

Exception must be made in favour of *Les Juives*, which would be the finest French Biblical tragedy if it were not for *Athalie*. *Nabuchodonosor* seizes the kingdom of Juda,



PORTRAIT OF ROBERT GARNIER

From the portrait painted by Rabél, engraved  
by G. de Mallery.

and wishes to destroy the royal family. The supplications of *Amital*, mother of *Sédécie*, King of Juda, touch the wife and sons-in-law of *Nabuchodonosor*, who try to soften the Assyrian king. But we learn that they have cut the throats of *Sédécie*'s children in the unfortunate king's presence, and have afterwards put out

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 225.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 227.



his eyes. Without doubt, it is less action than a series of situations. Nevertheless, in reading *Les Juives* one is truly surprised to see what Garnier has known how to develop from grief, pity, cruelty, in short all the tragic sentiments. Moreover, the breath of the Deity passes over this sacred tragedy: by the words of the prophet, the grandiose character who appears in the first and fifth acts, the situation is broadened, and produces an impression of religious terror. The choruses of young Jewesses, very well handled and successfully mingled with the action, bring this French tragedy nearer to those of Grece.

Garnier's plays include an eighth piece of an especial genre, a "tragi-comedy"

*Bradamante*. The subject is taken from Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, in which *Bradamante*, daughter of *Aymon* and of *Béatrice*, is represented as an invincible amazon, loved by *Roger*, a converted Saracen prince. In Garnier's tragi-comedy, *Bradamante* brings into contact two rivals: *Roger*, and *Léon*, son of the Emperor of Constantinople. The action is complicated by one of those mistakes of identity so frequent in chivalric romance. The denouement is a happy one, as it is the attractive *Roger* who marries *Bradamante* (1).



A THEATRE IN THE XVI CENTURY

After a print on wood taken from *Térence de Roigny*.

**ANTOINE DE MONTCHRESTIEN** (?-1621).—The last tragic poet whom we can connect with the sixteenth century, Montchrestien, led the most adventurous existence. A passionate duellist, forced to exile himself in England, returning to France under Henri IV and engaged in manufacturing, he wrote his tragedies for pastime, and without renouncing his escapades. He ended by getting himself killed under Louis XIII. by joining a Huguenot uprising.

We have six tragedies by Montchrestien: *Sophonisbe* (1596), imitated from the Italian; *Les Lacènes* (*Lacédémoniennes*) ou *la Constance* (1599), taken from Plu-

(1) There is an analysis of *Bradamante* in DARMSTETER et HATZFELD.

tarch's *Vie de Cléomène de Sparte*; *David* (1600); *Aman* (1601) (1); *Hector* (1603); *L'Ecossoise ou Marie Stuart* (1605) (2). This last piece is his best; the characters of Elizabeth and Mary Stuart are very well drawn, and the style, in its ease and suavity, foretells Racine.

In studying the predecessors of Corneille, we shall see that tragedy did not cease to be cultivated and improved, and how it finally passed from college courtyards and books to the stage, which, on the other hand, had been preparing for its reception.

## II. — COMEDY.

**Influence of Antiquity.**—As we have already said in our conclusions upon mediæval comedy, it was not a question, as in the case of tragedy, of one genre being substituted for another, but simply of evolution. Sixteenth century comedy was the *farce* of the fifteenth combined with the *moralité*. At the same time should be mentioned a few translations and imitations of antique models which served to render more *human* and more *regular* a popular genre about to become a literary genre.—Ronsard translated in 1549 Aristophanes' *Plutus*, which was played at the college of Coqueret; and in 1565 de Baif translated the *Eunuchus* of Terence, and the *Miles gloriosus* of Plautus in 1567.

**Italian Influence.**—Italian influence was by far the most powerful. It was good in the sense that it taught French authors to vary their situations and to strengthen their plots; it was bad in that it introduced into French comedy a certain number of conventional types — old men, guardians, valets, bullies, lovers and *ingénus*, which it has been very difficult to get rid of, and which stereotyped, in a way, constantly brought with them the same situations and the same witticisms.—The first imitations were translations of *I Suppositi* by Ariosto, by Jacques Bourgeois in 1545, then by Jean-Pierre de Mesme in 1552. Jean de la Taille translated *Négromante* by Ariosto about 1560. But we should also mention the Italian productions in France, at Lyons and Paris, and which flourished especially at court, where everybody knew Italian, and had a taste for imbroglio and license.

**Comedies in Verse.**—**JODELLE** inaugurated, or thought to inaugurate, a new genre of comedy with *Eugène*, represented at the same time as *Cléopâtre* in 1552. In an obscure and pretentious prologue he poses as an innovator. *Eugène* is in five acts, with nine characters, and is written in decasyllabic verse. The subject is one of the most risqué, and is connected with jests against the clergy which form the substance of the most cynical French *fabliaux*. There

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 231.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 229.

is not a single virtuous or honest character in the whole five acts; and only one is comic in the true sense of the word, *Guillaume*, the husband of *Alix*.

**RÉMY BELLEAU** left *La Reconnue*, only published after his death, in 1577. The heroine of the piece is a young girl saved by an officer at the siege of Poitiers, and who, in the denoument, is *recognised* by her father. The plot, though a bit slow, is not badly constructed: Antoinette, the young girl, beloved by the son of the old lawyer in whose household the captain has placed her, is on the point of marrying in spite of herself the clerk, Master *Jean*, at the very moment when the unexpected arrival of the captain and her father deliver her.

**JACQUES GRÉVIN** published *La Trésorière* in 1558 (1), and *Les Ébahis* in 1560. The first recalls Jodelle's *Eugène*, the second is an indirect imitation from the Italian.



REPRESENTATION OF A FARCE AT THE END OF THE XVI CENTURY  
After a contemporary print.

**Prose Comedies.**—It was probably Italian influence, as comedy was written in prose in Italy, which decided sixteenth century French writers to abandon verse (2).

We should first mention a comedy by **JEAN DE LA TAILLE**, *Les Corrivaux*, (or *Rivaux d'amour*), probably composed in 1562, and which shows a certain ease in the dialogue.

But the most remarkable comic writer of this time was **PIERRE LARIVEY** (1540-1611). He was born at Troyes; his father, an Italian, belonged to the *Giunti* family, celebrated Venitian printers. Established in France, he changed his name to *L'Arrivé*, which became *Larivey*. Pierre took orders, and became

(1) Read in DARMSTETER and HATZFELD'S, *Morceaux choisis*, p. 360, a scene from *La Trésorière*.

(2) Read in the same volume, p. 365, Pierre Larivey's Letter to M. d'Amboise on the use of prose in comedy.

canon of the church of St. Etienne de Troyes. He knew *Italian* literature thoroughly, and produced a great number of translations of all sorts, tales, morals, theology, etc. He had this advantage over learned Frenchmen, that he possessed the *spirit* and *traditions* of comedy in his own country, and he adapted twelve Italian pieces for French audiences, six of which were published by himself in 1579, and three more were published in 1611. The others have been lost.—These comedies are : *Le Laquais*, *La Veuve*, *Les Esprits*, *Le Morfondu*, *Les Jaloux*, *Les Écoliers*, *Constance*, *Le Fidèle* and *Les Tromperies*. Larivey followed his Italian model closely ; but he introduced all the changes of place, conditions, circumstances, necessary to make the piece thoroughly French. This son of Italians, Champenois by birth, was truly the man needed to adapt Italian genius, to the French without losing any of its essential elements. His pieces were not played, but they were read and re-read, and passed through many editions. And Molière knew how to avail himself of them.

Two of these are still pleasant reading : *Les Écoliers*, and especially *Les Esprits*. The latter is related, in the past, to the *Aulularia* of Plautus, and in the future to Molière's *L'École des maris* and *L'Avare*, and to the *Retour imprévu* of Regnard. This is briefly the theme : —(and we shall recognise that the original Italian, *L'Aridosiō* by Lorenzino de Médicis, is for the greater part a "contamination" of the *Aulularia* and the *Adelphi*)—There are two old brothers, one, *Hilaire*, indulgent and generous, the other, *Séverin*, wicked and avaricious. The latter confides one of his sons, *Fortuné*, to *Hilaire*; he himself brings up the other son, *Urbain*, and his daughter *Laurence*. The plot consists of the obstacles these young people meet with in their love affairs ; but all ends well with the marriage of *Urbain* with *Féliciane*, of *Fortuné* with *Apoline*, and *Laurence* with *Désiré*. The best character scenes, however, are created by the avarice of *Séverin*, and the knavery of the valet *Frontin*. *Séverin*, wishing to return to his house to leave there a purse full of gold, is prevented by *Frontin* who declares that his house is haunted by *ghosts* (whence the title of the play). *Séverin*, frightened, hides the purse in a hole, without suspecting that he is watched by *Désiré*, the lover of his daughter *Laurence*; his hesitation, his fears and prayers are rendered with a comic truth worthy of Plautus and Molière, neither of whom has produced the counterpart of this scene (1). When *Séverin* has departed, *Désiré* steals the contents of the purse. The miser soon returns to see once more his "*chère bourse*," and finds it full of pebbles. He bursts out into lamentations in a monologue imitated from Plautus, and imitated in its turn by Molière (2). The scene with *Frontin* which follows is equally amusing and good, being an ingenious development of the monologue. Finally in scenes VI and VIII of Act V, occur mistakes of identity which Molière has known how to use, and several excellent examples of what are called *mots de nature*. When *Séverin*'s crowns are returned to him, he cries out : "*O Dieu ! ce sont les mêmes !...*" And when he is told that his son is going to marry a maiden dowered with fifteen thousand francs, he says : "*Quinze mille francs ! Il sera plus riche que moi* (3)."

In Larivey's other comedies there are also scenes of a deep and lasting comic quality. Doubtless the credit belongs to the original Italian writers whom he

(1) Read this scene in DARMSTETER and HATZFELD, p. 367.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 233.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 234.



has translated ; but his style is his own, and we are somewhat surprised to find dialogues so piquant, dramatic and well-turned, and which remind us frequently of Molière. Finally, we should mention **ODET DE TURNÈBE**, son of the Hellenist Adrien Turnèbe. Dying prematurely in 1584, he left in manuscript, a comedy imitated both from the Italian and from the *Célestina* of the Spanish writer Fernando de Rojas, entitled *Les Contents*. This piece, somewhat confused but amusing and well-written, is, according to M. E. Rigal, the masterpiece of sixteenth century comedy. It may be found in Edouard Fournier's *Le Théâtre au seizième siècle*. This work contains also *Les Néapolitaines* by F. d'Amboise (1584).

Towards the end of the century, comedy written in verse reappeared, but no interesting work. Authors were italianised, in the narrow meaning of the word, more and more ; they dreamed of nothing but *imbroglios*, and all their characters were traditional. Meanwhile the *farce*, more hardy than ever, occupied the stage ; and true comedy did not make its reappearance until Corneille's *Mélie*, in 1629.

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DECORATIVE FRIEZE BY ETIENNE DELAULNE [1518 (?) - 1585 (?) ]

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THEOLOGIAN.—HISTORIAN.—POLITICIAN.

#### SUMMARY

1. **CALVIN** (1509-1564) was converted to Protestantism and took refuge at Nérac, then at Bâle, and then established himself at Geneva. At first driven from that city by the free-thinkers, he returned in 1541, where until his death he exercised a veritable dictatorship.

He published in Latin, and then translated into French, *L'Institution chrétienne* in 1541, dedicated to François I, a work remarkable for its method and the elevated severity of its style.

With Calvin we should name, among Protestant writers, **GUILLAUME FAREL**, **THÉODORE DE BÈZE**, **DUPLESSIS-MORNAY**.

2. **SAINT FRANÇOIS DE SALES** (1568-1622) was Bishop of Geneva, and lived at Annecy. He came to Paris and preached there with great success before returning to Savoie. He only published *L'Introduction à la vie dévote* (1608), a work formed from a collection of letters written to Madame de Charmoisy, and *Le Traité de l'amour de Dieu* (1616), more theological. His originality lies in the breadth of his christianity, and the poetic gentleness of his style.

3. The most celebrated authors of *memoirs* were : **LE LOYAL SERVITEUR**, author of *La Vie de Bayard* (1524), — **FRANÇOIS DE LA NOUE**, a Protestant, whose *Discours politiques et militaires* are a code of bravery and solid piety, — **BLAISE DE MONTLUC**, a Catholic, who published a narrative of his campaigns in his vivid and picturesque *Commentaires* (1574), — **AGRIPPA D'AUBIGNÉ**, a Protestant, whose principal works in prose were a *Histoire universelle* (1616-1620) and his *Vie à ses Enfants*.

4. **POLITICAL WRITERS.** — **LA BOÉTIE** left a *Discours sur la servitude volontaire*, published in 1576 after his death, which is an eloquent protest against tyranny. **MICHEL DE L'HOSPITAL** and **JEAN BODIN** should be also cited.

5. **THE SATYRE MÉNIPPÉE**, which appeared in 1594, was a pamphlet written

in collaboration by several magistrates and men of letters, in favour of Henri IV, in the time of the Ligue. The work begins with a sort of **parade** in the courtyard of the Louvre, followed by a **procession** of the *Ligueurs*, by **speeches** of the deputies to the States General (the most famous being that of Daubray in the name of the Third Estate), and ends with some pieces in burlesque verse. It is a masterpiece of common sense and wit.

### I.—CALVIN (1509-1564).



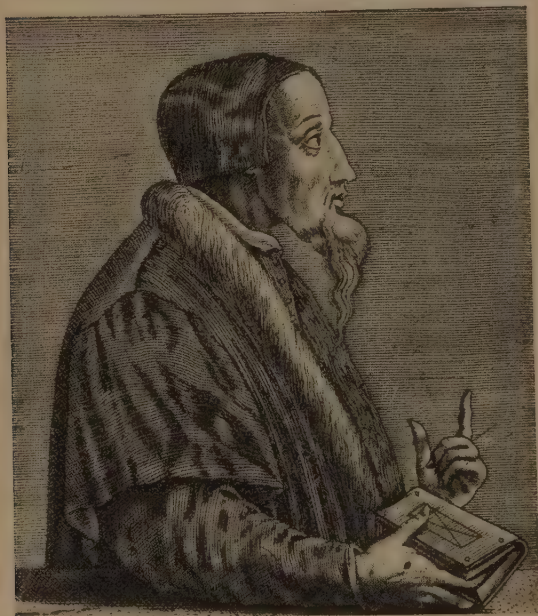
DECORATED LETTER  
of the XVI century.

**Life.**—Jean Chauvin, who latinised the name into *Calvinus*, from which was evolved in turn the new French form, Calvin (cf. Tourneur, Turnebus, Turnèbe), was born at Noyon in Picardy, on July 10, 1509. Early destined for the Church, he studied at the college of Montaigu, in Paris, and was appointed to a cure at the age of nineteen; but he was not a priest, having only received the tonsure. He went to Orléans to study law under Pierre de l'Étoile; at Bourges he attended the lectures of the famous Alciat, and studied Greek with Melchior Wolmar. Returning to Paris in 1532, his first work was a Latin commentary of Seneca's *De Clementia*. Even from

that time he was converted to the Reformation. That same year Calvin was obliged to save himself by flight from legal proceedings decreed against the Protestants, in consequence of a harangue by Nicolas Cop, rector of the University of Paris, inspired by Calvin himself. Taking refuge first at Orléans, then at Poitiers and Nérac, Calvin reached Bâle, whence he addressed to François I (1535) a letter of protest against the tortures inflicted upon heretics. It was at Bâle that he published the first edition, in Latin, of the *Institutio religionis christianæ*. From Bâle he went to pass some time at Ferrara, near Renée de France, and finally settled in Geneva, which Guillaume Farel had converted to the Reformation. There he made his theological and political authority so despotically felt that the *free-thinkers* (*libertins*, partisans of liberty) banished him, as well as Farel, in 1538. Calvin went to Strasbourg, where he married; but he was recalled by his own party to Geneva in 1541, and there he reigned as master, as intolerant as he was devoted, until his death in 1564.

“**L’Institution de la Religion Chrétienne**”—Calvin rehandled the Latin text which he had published in 1536 and 1539, in order to make a French edit

ion which appeared at Strasbourg in 1521 (1).—The work is preceded by a *Dedication* to the King of France, François I., which is full of animation, logic and eloquence, in spite of several incongruities, and in which he defends the Reformation in the name of the true Christian tradition; and also refutes the attacks of those who claimed that the Reformers were enemies of royal authority. The work is divided into four parts:—I. *De connaître Dieu en titre et qualité de créateur et souverain gouverneur du monde.*—II. *De la connaissance de Dieu en tant qu'il s'est montré rédempteur en Jésus-Christ.*—III. *De la manière de participer à la grâce de Jésus-Christ, des fruits qui nous en reviennent et des grâces qui s'ensuivent.*—IV. *Des moyens extérieurs ou aides dont Dieu se sert pour nous convier à Jésus-Christ, son fils, et nous retenir à lui.*



PORTRAIT OF CALVIN

After an anonymous print of the XVI century.

The reader will readily perceive the learned gradation of this plan. Now, each part of the book is ordered with the same logic — so much so that *L'Institution chrétienne* is rightly classed as the first book that was really composed in the French language.—Calvin also rendered to the French language the immense ser-

vice of having poured into it, so to speak, the whole Biblical and theological treasure. These subjects, until then reserved for the dignity of Latin, were for the first time set forth in popular language more than a hundred years before Pascal's *Provinciales*. Calvin's style is serious, concise, logical, sometimes trivial, often eloquent; he essentially lacks colour, and Bossuet pronounces him *sad*. His vocabulary has not gone out of fashion; and his ideas are so closely connected that he is much more easily read than Montaigne (2).

(1) An enlarged Latin edition appeared at Geneva in 1559, and after this appeared a new French version in 1560, the text of which should be adopted in preference to that of 1541.—*Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 237.

(2) Quite recently Calvin's *L'Excuse de notre Seigneur Jacques de Bourgoigne* (Paris, Lemerre,

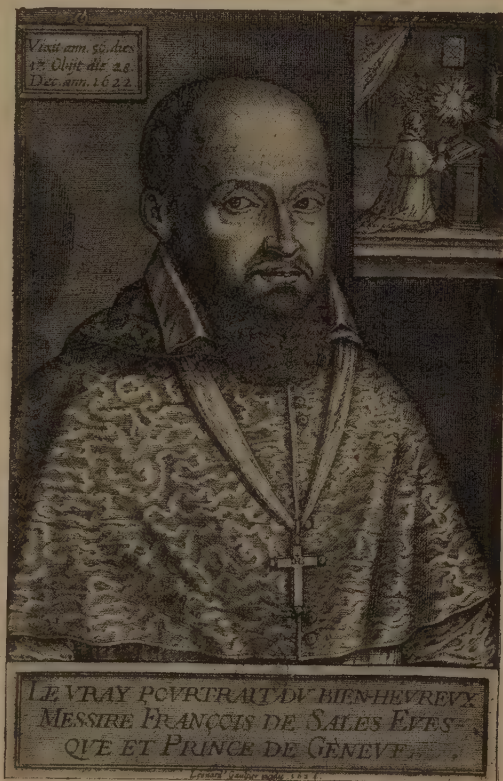


**Other Writers on the Reformation.**—With Calvin we may cite : **Guillaume Farel** (1489-1565), celebrated for his sermons ; — **Théodore de Bèze** (1519-1605), first wrote verse, and then a large number of Latin works in defense of the Reformation. He wrote in French a *Vie de Calvin*, a *Histoire des Eglises réformées au royaume de France*, and a Biblical tragedy, *Abraham sacrificant*, which was played at the University of Lausanne ; — **Pierre Viret** (1511-1571), left several dialogues and moral works, of unequal satiric spirit, but frequently piquant ; — **Du-plessis-Mornay** (1549-1623) was surnamed the “Pope of the Huguenots” because of his theological learning, and until his death he directed the reformed churches of France. His *Traité de la vérité de la religion chrétienne* (1581), written chiefly against the *libertins* and not the Catholics, is one of the best theological works of the sixteenth century.

## II. — SAINT FRANÇOIS DE SALES (1568-1622).

**Life.**—Member of an illustrious family of Savoy, François de Sales studied at the college of Clermont, and the Sorbonne in Paris. He then studied law at the University of Padua, and while still very young was appointed councillor to the Senate at Chambéry. But a serious vocation led him to enter the priesthood. He was charged with missions to Protestant countries where, by his simple and persuasive eloquence, and the Christian gentleness of his character, he succeeded in

1904) has been published. It is a justificative memoir, in the style of the *logographers* at Athens. Its logic is strong and insistent, and it defends Protestantism with circumspection and eloquence.



PORTRAIT OF SAINT FRANÇOIS DE SALES

After the print of Léonard Gaultier (1561, † vers 1630).

making numerous conversions in the Chablais country. In 1596 the Bishop of Geneva appointed him his coadjutor. François de Sales afterwards travelled to Paris, where he charmed the court with his Lenten sermons (1602).

But Henry IV tried vainly to retain him. Appointed Bishop of Geneva, while living at Annecy, François de Sales published in 1608 an *Introduction à la vie dévote*. Though this work met with immediate success, which has lasted down to the present time, it was but an incident in an existence entirely devoted to preaching and administration. In 1616, appeared his *Traité de l'amour de Dieu*. In 1618, he returned to Paris; in 1620, with Madame de Chantal, he founded the order of the Visitation. His death occurred suddenly at Lyons in 1622.

**His Works.**—The many works of Saint François de Sales comprise: *Controversial* works against Protestants; *Sermons* (of which we probably do not possess the original text); *Entretiens Spirituels*, noted down by the nuns of the Visitation of Annecy, and often of doubtful authenticity); *Letters*, also of questionable authenticity (1); finally, his two most celebrated works, and the only ones which he published himself: *L'Introduction à la vie dévote* (1608) and the *Traité de l'amour de Dieu* (1616).

*L'Introduction à la vie dévote* is one of those books which make themselves from day to day, and a part of whose value lies in the fact that they are not, properly speaking, books at all. It consists simply of a collection of *letters on spiritual subjects* addressed, during Lent in 1607, to Madame de Charmois, of Annecy. The interest of these Letters lies in the intention of the author, who says in his Preface: "Those who have written of devotion have almost always regarded their instruction as destined for people remote from everyday affairs, or at least have taught a kind of devotion which results in such a retirement. My intention is to instruct those who are married, who live in the city, or at court, and who are compelled by their condition to live the common life..." From this arose the great success of the work; everybody wished to profit by this *practical devotion*, to become, like the *Philothée*, to whom the Letters are dedicated, an elect soul without renouncing the world. Readers were also fascinated by the charm of the style which is one of exquisite sweetness, full of agreeable metaphor and picturesque imagery, though not without a slight touch of finicalness.—*L'Introduction* is composed of five parts: in the first, the author defines *true devotion*, and how to acquire a desire for it; in the second, he gives *diverse advice for the elevation of the soul to God by prayer and the Sacrament*,—in the third, *various advice touching the exercise of the virtues*: this is the longer and more practical part, and his advice is as witty as it is wise. The fourth part deals with *temptations*; the fifth to the *exercises suitable for renewing the soul and confirming it in its devotion*.

(1) All these works were published after his death, 1622.

The *Traité de l'amour de Dieu*, addressed to *Théotime*, is a more profound work from the doctrinal point of view. In this, true *charity* is defined with a finesse often subtle, but also with force and sureness. The author carries the love of God to the extreme limits of orthodox mysticism; and he stops at the point where Fénelon was to take it up and make of it *quietism*.

**Other Catholic Writers. Preachers.**—Cardinal *Du Perron* (1556-1618), was—the opposite of Calvin—a Protestant converted to Catholicism. In his turn, he had a large share in the conversion of Henri IV. His fame rests chiefly upon his funeral oration for Ronsard. He was at the same time a man of learning and an apologist, and in the latter capacity was a precursor of Bossuet.—*Nicolas Coëffeteau* (1574-1623) is also best known by a funeral oration, that upon Henri IV. He was as active as du Perron in polemics against the Protestants. In the seventeenth century much was thought of his *Histoire romaine* (1621), from which Vaugelas liked to take, as he did from Amyot, authoritative grammatical examples.—No other Catholic preacher of the sixteenth century, except Saint François de Sales, merits a place in the history of literature. Bad taste, profane learning and violence of style had invaded the Christian pulpit.

### III.—HISTORIANS AND AUTHORS OF MEMOIRS.

The sixteenth century abounded in historians and authors of *Mémoires*; but none of them properly belongs to literature, and can be compared, no matter how interesting their works, with a Froissart or a Commines. We shall therefore enumerate them briefly, only insisting upon the profit they afford to learned readers.

**LE LOYAL SERVITEUR** (?).—This was the name assumed by the author of the exquisite *Histoire du gentil seigneur de Bayart*, which appeared in 1524 after the death of the chevalier without fear and without reproach. The anonymous author, as distinguished as he was modest, had assuredly been a fellow-soldier and friend of Bayard, as Joinville had been of Saint Louis. And this comparison with Joinville, both as to subject and form, renders any other judgment unnecessary.

**FRANÇOIS DE LA NOUE** (1521-1591), was one of the most valiant captains of the Protestant party. He took part in all the wars, in the service of the Prince de Condé, and then of Henri IV. At Fontenay-le-Comte his left arm was broken by a shot from an arquebuse; it was amputated and replaced by an artificial arm, whence his surname of *Bras-de-Fer*, which became a glorious tradition in his family. As admirable in character as he was in courage, La Noue

preserved, among the civic troubles of his time, a moderation and grandeur of soul which has caused him to be compared to a hero of Plutarch. He died a soldier's death, like Bayard, hit in the forehead by a bullet at the siege of Montcontour.—Several times taken prisoner, La Noue wrote, during these periods of enforced repose, his *Discours politiques et militaires*, in which he treats as much of religion and morals as of war; and the lofty wisdom of his reflections gives

him a place beside L'Hospital and du Vair. Although La Noue continually bases his discourses upon the historical facts which he himself witnessed, yet only one of his *Discours*, the twenty-sixth, is properly speaking *historical*. It is a coherent narrative of political and military events from 1562 to 1570.



PORTRAIT OF BLAISE DE MONTLUC

After an original sketch of the XVI century,  
engraved in the XVII.

a mask to the end of his life. It was during this premature retirement that he dictated his *Commentaires*, which Henri IV called the *Bible of the soldier*. These *Commentaires* consist of seven books, in which Montluc describes his campaigns from 1519 to 1574.

Montluc wrote for his fellow-soldiers, his children, and all future captains. "It has been my wish," he says, "to employ what time remains to me in describing the battles in which I have taken part during the fifty-two years of my command, feeling sure that those captains who may read my life will find

**BLAISE DE MONTLUC**  
(1502-1577). — Montluc first distinguished himself by his successes in Italy, under Henri II., the defense of Sienna having always remained one of the most glorious episodes in French military history. The number and importance of his victories would have ranked Montluc among the greatest of French warriors, had he not practiced, during the religious wars, a cruelty which has become proverbial. He did not leave the service until he had received at the siege of Rabastens, in 1570, a horrible wound which disfigured him and obliged him to wear



there experiences of which they will be able to avail themselves, should they find themselves in similar situations..."

Again he says: "This is not a book for men of learning: we have enough historians; but for a military captain..." He recalls that Cæsar, "the greatest captain who ever lived," wrote his *Commentaries*. "I have wished, therefore, to set forth my own, ill polished as they must be, coming from the hand of a soldier — and furthermore a Gascon, who has always been more anxious to do well than to talk well... (1)" He tells his story with the impulsive animation of a man of action and a Gascon, without either boasting or mock humility. We read it as if we listened to a vivid recital, accurate and abounding in technical details. And while, doubtless, strategy and tactics have changed too much for the *captains* of our time to learn the art of war from Montluc, yet his book will always be useful to them as long as personal bravery, abnegation and enthusiasm shall be the qualities proper to the French soldier.

**AGRIPPA D'AUBIGNÉ** (1552-1630).— In contrast to the fanatical Catholic Blaise de Montluc, is the grim Protestant d'Aubigné — whom we have already referred to in the chapter on *Poetry*. Towards the end of a life even more agitated than La Noue's and de Montluc's, d'Aubigné wrote pamphlets and historical works.—*Les Aventures du baron de Fœnesté* is a satirical dialogue between a Catholic nobleman, swaggering and gallant, and ridiculously elegant, who is without sincerity and thus justifies his name of Fœnesté (from the Greek word φαίνω, signifying to *appear*), and a Protestant country nobleman, sincere, honest, and caring less for *appearing* than for *being*: whence his name, *Enay*.—*La Confession de Sancy* is a pamphlet, more violent and less intellectual, launched against Protestants who become converted, and those who work for their conversion.—*L'Histoire Universelle*, which appeared in three folio volumes between 1616 and 1620, covers the events from 1550 to 1601. Despite its ambitious title, it is nothing more than a history of France, and particularly of the Protestant party. However, at the end of each book d'Aubigné adds remarks concerning the state of affairs in the *East*, the *South*, etc. He should chiefly be praised for having strengthened his work with documentary proof, and, so far as it was possible to him, having made it impartial.—*Sa vie à ses Enfants*, which sometimes bears the title of *Mémoires*, is a sincere and complete autobiography, worth our while both for the knowledge we acquire of a character ardent and generous even in its mistakes, and for the numerous comparisons with and references to the author's *Histoire Universelle*.—D'Aubigné's prose has the same merits and defects as his poetry; it is often confused, surcharged, obscure, but more often vivid, animated and picturesque, and always impassioned,

We should again mention *Marguerite de Valois* (1553-1618), first wife of

(1) Book I (Ruble's edition, vol. I)

Henri IV., who left *Mémoires* and *Lettres*; — **Jacques-Auguste de Thou** (1553-1617), who wrote a *Histoire de mon temps*, in Latin; — **Pierre de l'Estoile** (1546-1614), author of a *Journal*, that is to say, a narrative made day by day of all that he saw and heard from 1574-1611. — This work is valuable as a contribution to the history of Henri III and Henri IV; — finally, **Brantôme** has already been cited in the chapter on *Story-Writers*; his *Vies des grands capitaines* ranks him with the historians.

#### IV. — POLITICAL WRITERS.

Political writers, like historians and scholars were legion in the sixteenth century, an epoch of general intellectual fermentation, in which everything, through the influence of the ancients, was undergoing revision. But here we must beware of making a too close comparison between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries; and it is precisely this imitation of the ancients, so often substituted for the personal expression of the author, which should put us on our guard. We are sometimes deceived in considering as the vibrant protest of some independent and courageous soul, what is merely a schoolboy adaptation from Seneca, Sallust or Livy. This is exactly the case with Étienne de La Boétie.

**LA BOÉTIE** (1530-1563). — His Greek translations (of Aristotle's *Economica*, Xenophon's *Mesnagerie*) have been forgotten, as well as his poetry (twenty-eight sonnets of which were published in the *Essais*, I, 28), and this celebrated friend of Montaigne is chiefly remembered as the author of *Discours sur la servitude volontaire* (also called *Le Contre un*). La Boétie was inspired by Seneca's Maxim (Letters to Lucilius, 47): "*Nulla servitus turpior est quam voluntaria*". — Properly speaking this *discours* is what the ancients called a *declamation*, and we know from Montaigne that La Boétie "wrote it as a sort of essay in his early youth, in honour of liberty against tyrants." Montaigne also says: "He handled this subject in his youth merely as an exercise, a popular subject pulled this way and that in a thousand books." (I, 27). — And La Boétie did not publish it himself; he died in 1563, and the *Discours* did not appear until 1576 in a Protestant collection entitled, *Mémoires de l'Estat de France sous Charles neuvième*. — On the other hand, no one can say whether after all La Boétie did not express his own sentiments, through all his borrowings from and allusions to Latin and Greek antiquity; for the historian de Thou tells us that the cruel repressions ordered by the Constable de Montmorency in Guyenne aroused in the young La Boétie the indignation from which sprang the *Discours*. Now La Boétie was still a student of eighteen, and it is not surprising that his very sincere sentiments should have been expressed in a schoolboyish manner.

However this may be, in reading the *Servitude volontaire* we are impressed as by the most powerful eloquence. The general trend of the *Discours*, the form of its arguments, its figures of speech, all proceed from a man admirably gifted for oratory and who, in a public assembly, would have caused his listeners to tremble with anger or enthusiasm. Villemain said: "We seem to be reading an ancient manuscript found in the ruins of Rome, under the broken statue of the younger Gracchus." It might be added that La Boétie, in the vehement declamation of his youthful Southern spirit, resembles a *Girondist* of the sixteenth century (1).

Among other *political theorists* may be cited **Jean Bodin** (1530-1596), who played an important part in the *Etats de Blois*, and who upheld the principle of constitutional monarchy in his *Six livres de la République* (1576-1578), a work in which the influence of Machiavelli is evident, and which, translated into Latin by Bodin himself, met with great success throughout all Europe. Bodin was a predecessor of Montesquieu.

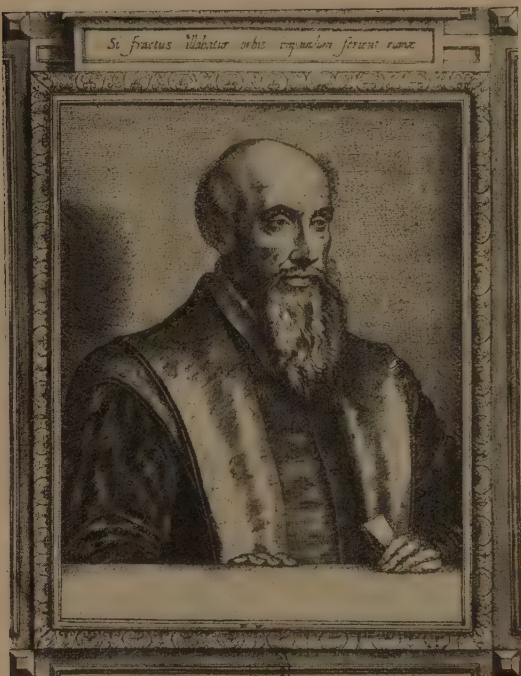


ÉTIENNE DE LA BOÉTIE'S HOUSE AT SARLAT

**MICHEL DE L'HOSPITAL** (1505-1573).—After long study of the law, and various diplomatic missions and judicial charges, in which his learning and judgment made him highly appreciated, L'Hospital became Grand Chancellor of France during the Regency of Catherine de Médicis. Himself a very sincere Catholic, he was indignant at the fanaticism of the two parties. By the Decree of Romorantin he prevented the establishment of the Inquisition in France; and by the Statutes of Orléans in 1560 and of Moulins in 1566, he brought about legal and judicial reforms. He said, "Let us drop these diabolical words, names of parties and seditions,

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 253.

Lutheran, Huguenot, Papist: let us keep the name of Christians!" We know to what extent the efforts of this generous spirit were made in vain: in 1568 L'Hospital was obliged to resign his functions. Retiring to Vignay, near



PORTRAIT OF MICHAEL DE L'HOSPITAL

From the print of Léonard Gaultier (1561 vers 1630).

Etampes, he witnessed from afar the horrors of the civil war, just missing falling a victim of both parties; and when the King sent word to him that he forgave him, he replied: "I am ignorant that I have ever merited either death or forgiveness."—Like most of the magistrates of his time, L'Hospital was learned and accomplished; he composed distinguished *Latin poetry*. But here we should chiefly mention his oratorical and political works *Harangues*, *Mercuriales*, *Remontrances*, a collection of his discourses delivered under diverse circumstances. His ideas are true and lofty, simple in expression, but with occasional bursts of genuine eloquence. One is struck above all in this century of *declamatory tendencies*, by his unpedantic, gentlemanly tone. L'Hospital's most remarkable production is his *Mémoire à*

*Charles IX sur le but de la guerre et de la paix*, which was published in 1572 (1).

## V.—LA SATYRE MÉNIPPÉE.

Of the the great number of pamphlets originated by the Ligue, one only remains famous, *La Satyre Ménippée* (2). In the disordered situation into which

(1) Read extracts from *Michel de l'Hospital* in the *Morceaux choisis* of F. GODEFROY, p. 321.

(2) The name *Ménippée* was given by the ancients to satires composed both in prose and verse together, a genre invented, it is said, by the Greek philosopher, *Menippus* (first century B. C.), and



the death of Henri III had thrown the various political parties, the authors of this national manifesto struck the true note, that of Frenchmen who, while wishing that Henri IV should be converted to the Catholic religion, did not regard his Protestantism as disqualifying him from being the only legitimate heir to the crown, and rejected with all their might either a Lorrain prince, or a Spanish one. Doubtless, it would be an exaggeration to say that this pamphlet, published in 1594, opened the gates of Paris to Henry IV; but it repre-



PROCESSION OF THE LEAGUE ON THE 3RD JUNE 1590.

After an anonymous contemporary print.

sented the state of mind of the moderate party, composed both of gownsmen and citizens, the fear felt by those who, under pretext of religion, only worked for themselves, and the clear-sightedness of the Parisians who recognised in Henri IV a prince sufficiently intelligent and courageous to restore peace and prosperity.

**The Authors.**—It is said that the authors of the *Ménippée* gathered in a little room on the Quai des Orfèvres, belonging to Jacques Gillot, canon of the Sainte-Chapelle and councillor to the *Parlement* of Paris, and where, forty years later,

imitated at Rome by T. Varro, a contemporary of Cicero. Thus the title simply indicates the genre, and there must have been at that time a host of *Ménippées*, of which only this one is still celebrated.

Boileau was to be born. These authors were: *Pierre Le Roy*, canon of Rouen; —*Pierre Pithou*, a celebrated jurisconsult and scholar converted to Catholicism in 1573, and who became Procuror General in the *Parlement* of Paris under Henri IV. He wrote excellent books on law, and his Latin editions of Quintilian, Petronius, and especially Phædrus, rank him with the most eminent humanists of the sixteenth century; —*Gilles Durand*, a lawyer and poet, whose verses were published under the title, *Les OEuvres poétiques du sieur de la Bergerie* (1594), —*Jean Passerat*, professor at the College of the Plessis, successor to Ramus at the College of France in 1572; he wrote some agreeable and witty French and Latin verses and some learned commentaries on Latin authors; —*Florent Chrestien*, also a convert to Catholicism, had been a pupil of Henri Estienne, and tutor to Henri IV; he is now less known by his translations and his Latin verses than by his collaboration in *La Satyre Ménippée*; —*Nicolas Rapin*, famous chiefly for his literary relations with Régnier, who dedicated to him his ninth satire against Malherbe, was a magistrate, Grand Provost of the Constabulary, and wrote many French and Latin verses. — What part had each of these authors in the *Satyre*? It is believed that Jacques Gillot wrote the harangue of *M. le Légat*; and Pierre Le Roy the preamble, *La Vertu du catholicon d'Espagne*; that Nicolas Rapin composed the harangues of *M. de Lyon* and *Docteur Rose*, as well as a few epigrams at the end; and Florent Chrestien, that of Cardinal de Pelevé; that Gilles Durand wrote the complaint of the ass-leauger; and finally, that Pierre Pithou composed the eloquent harangue of *Daubray*, representing the Third-Estate.

**Plan.**—Though this work was composed at different times, and by seven collaborators, it presents nevertheless more or less unity. It has been compared, as a whole, to a free dramatic composition in the style of the time: the first part would be analogous to the *cry* of the Mysteries; the second resembles the *montre* which preceded the representation, and the harangues would compose the substance of the piece.

It opens in the courtyard of the Louvre, February 10, 1593, the opening day of the States, convoked by the lieutenant-general, the Duke de Mayenne, for the election of a king. Two quacks, one Spanish (Cardinal de Plaisance), the other Lorrain (Cardinal de Pelevé) offer the public their *catholicon*, the cure-all (1). The *catholicon* of the Spaniard has marvellous and ironical virtues: it bestows all the true virtues, and destroys all meanness. The Lorrain's cure-all is vapid, "lacking that most necessary ingredient, which is gold".—Thus are represented the two parties who wished to impose a foreign king upon France, to the exclusion of Henri IV.—Then follows the procession of the deputies: at

(1) To understand the jest contained in the use of the word *catholicon* it must be remembered that the apothecaries sold a drug with this name, a remedy proper, according to its etymology, for every malady.

the head, *M. Rose*, rector of the University, then the curés of Paris, the mendicants, the provosts of the merchants and aldermen, *Cardinal de Pelevé*, *M. le Légat*, *Madame de Nemours* (mother of Mayenne), several court ladies, among them the *Duchess de Mayenne*, etc. The curés, monks and aldermen, under their robes are ridiculously dressed in armour and all armed with swords and partisans. —All enter the hall of the States. Then follow descriptions of the tapestries which ornament this hall, representing ancient and modern subjects, by means of which the authors make piquant allusions to their contemporaries. —After all are placed, and the order of the meetings arranged, the series of harangues commences : *M. le Lieutenant* (Mayenne) speaks first ; then *M. le Légat*, *Cardinal de Pelevé*, *M. de Lyon*, the *Rector Rose*, *M. de Rieux* and *M. Daubray*. The meeting ends. There is another description of pictures, which were hung along the stairway, and which, like the tapestries, furnish subjects for allusions. —The *Satyre* ends with a few pieces in verse, French or Latin, the last being entitled : *A Mademoiselle ma commère, sur le trépas de son asne*.

**The Harangues.** — Of the seven discourses delivered before the States, the first six are composed by the same method : the orator says exactly the opposite of what he ought to say. It seems that Mayenne, the Rector, *M. de Rieux*, etc., are the playthings of some fatality which obliges them to betray, in spite of themselves, the secret motives of their conduct ; or that, hypnotised by a *medium*, they are forced at last to be sincere, and to substitute for the artful harangue they must have prepared in order to veil their conduct under fine specious arguments, an ingenuous and cynical avowal of the real motives of their actions. This method, which is very witty, becomes at length somewhat tiresome. —After this series of *transposed* discourses, comes Daubray's harangue, in which reason speaks with sincerity and eloquence. The deputy of the Third Estate draws a striking picture of the woes of the Parisians, contrasting with these the advantages of peace and the memory of past prosperity ; he believes that the sole remedy lies in the immediate recognition of the only legitimate king, *Henri IV*. This harangue may be criticised for its prolixity ; and it may especially be said that Daubray is too sensitive concerning material ills, and insists too much upon comfort, good food and the cost of living (1). His eloquence may be justly admired, and we may admit that such arguments were the best kind of which a citizen of Paris could and should make use ; but we should guard against an idealisation of his meaning.

**Style and Influence.** — It is not surprising that the style of this work should be most various. We sometimes seem to be reading Rabelais (at times the most rollicking Rabelais), sometimes Agrippa d'Aubigné, Guillaume du Vair,

(1) Read fragments of the *Ménippée* in the *Morceaux choisis* of DARMSTETER and HATZFELD, p. 43 and of F. GODEFROY, p. 429.

or Michel de l'Hospital. The three most remarkable parts are: Mayenne's harangue, Rieux's and Daubray's. Among the verses, it is sufficient to note the complaint at the end. As for the immediate and lasting influence of the *Ménippée*, we can but subscribe to the following judgment of M. de Crozals: "... It acted directly upon the great mass of readers, and was understood by them, and converted several thousand men instantaneously to collaborate in its cause; it appeared and remained a living work, and has deserved to outlive the tragic circumstances which were the pretext for its composition. Its originality lies perhaps in being the only work in French literature inspired by the politics of some special period, and which has been proclaimed a masterpiece (1).

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BOTTOM OF A LAMP BY ETIENNE DELAULNE





DECORATIVE FRIEZE BY JEAN LEPAUTRE (1618-1682).

## THIRD PART

# Seventeenth Century.

### CHAPTER I.

## GENERAL SURVEY OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

### SUMMARY

1. The seventeenth century is divided into three periods: a) 1600-1660; b) 1660-1685, epoch of pure **classicism**; c) 1685-1715, **transition**.
2. The general characteristics of **THIS CLASSICISM** were: the imitation of the ancients, the Christian spirit, reason, impersonality, separation of the genres, a carefully chosen language, a **polished** style.
3. **INFLUENCE OF LOUIS XIV**: the king **pensioned** writers, encouraged the Academies, received and honoured men of all kinds of genius, gave a certain unity to art and literature.
4. **THE PUBLIC**: Literature was usually **social**, made for the salons and for an élite, composed of two elements which balanced each other, the **court** and the **town**.
5. **ARTS**: Architecture and painting tend to grandeur and harmony.—**Sciences**: The great discoveries are made in foreign countries.
6. Among **EXTRINSIC INFLUENCES**: the religious quarrels; the misery of the end of the reign; Italy and Spain: though from 1660-1685 France disengaged herself more than ever from foreign literatures.

## I.—CHIEF DIVISIONS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.



DECORATED LETTER

by Abraham Bosse (1602-1676).

THE literature of the seventeenth century may be divided into three periods :

1<sup>o</sup> From 1600 to about 1660 : except in Malherbe, the *classical* spirit had not yet completely materialised. Great geniuses, like Corneille, Descartes, Pascal, had more independence and vigour. The genres were not absolutely determined, and writers of the second order struggled for liberty of thought and language.

2<sup>o</sup> From 1660-1685, the influence of Louis XIV was felt directly upon literature. The greatest writers worked together to realise, in eloquence and in poetry, the same ideal. Bossuet, Racine, Boileau, Molière, La Fontaine (the last two with less docility) represented classicism at the time of its most harmonious maturity.

3<sup>o</sup> From 1685 to 1715 was a period of transition. By their ideas and their style, La Bruyère, Saint-Simon and Fénelon announced the eighteenth century.

## II.—CLASSICISM.

If we examine classicism as it appears in the work of its most complete representatives, these are the essential elements, which we shall note briefly, as the study of individual authors constantly gives us occasion to repeat them :

1<sup>o</sup> Respect for and imitation of the **ancients**, considered as masters rather than *models*. They are not approached on their archaeological, historical or social side, but are asked to supply a *common ground for psychology and morals*, which may then be enriched by all that the human soul has gained by Christianity ; also they are asked to supply *genres*, to be modified to accord with the politeness of the seventeenth century.

2<sup>o</sup> **Christianity** — that is to say, the conception of man born in original sin, and who must battle against his wicked tendencies — inspires the whole of this literature, even, whatever may have been said on the subject, comedy and the fable. Christianity was deformed into *Jansenism*, not only by Pascal but by Boileau and Racine. Meanwhile, the poets make use of *mythology* but merely conventionally. They respect too much, or are compelled too strongly to respect Christianity to use the *Christian marvellous*.

3<sup>o</sup> Classical literature is **psychological**. It deals with the *interior man*, who alone seems interesting. The external world appears merely as a frame, or

scenery, and the description of it is reduced to a minimum. La Fontaine is an exception.—This psychology is *general* and *selected*; it has an eye to *truth* and especially *probability*, that is to say an assemblage of characteristics in which men of every time can recognise themselves.

4° The dominant quality is **reason**, that is, the faculty which enables us to separate the true from the false, the relative from the absolute. Nothing would be more naïve than to deny imagination and sensibility to the Pascals, Bossuets, Racines, La Fontaines; but in their case reason is *dominant*, and bridles and



PRINCIPAL PORTAL OF THE CHURCH OF THE SORBONNE

From the print of Jean Lepautre (1618-1682)?

Bonnet?

disciplines the other faculties. Thence their lack of *lyricism*, which flows from reverie and impassioned impulse.

5° All of this literature is **impersonal**. The author never expresses his own manner of thinking and feeling. He handles his subjects *didactically* or *dramatically*, that is, he develops principles which he finds outside of himself, or he makes each of his characters speak, in accordance with probability, the language proper to his situation and his nature.—But here again we should not exaggerate. The truth is, that each writer *wishes* to be impersonal; but, though they do not speak of themselves, a Corneille, a Bossuet, a Racine or a Molière betrays, all the same, in all his writings, the most powerful personality.

6° The **genres** are distinct from each other, and have their *laws*; which is to say that each of them, in order to realise its full effect and attain its particular end, makes use of the processes which are proper to itself; but, in each genre,

the *interior* variety was never greater. A tragedy by Racine bears less resemblance to a tragedy by Corneille, than a drama by Victor Hugo to one by Alexandre Dumas. And *Athalie* differs more from *Berenice* than *Ruy-Blas* from *Hernani*. And what shall be said of Molière? There was little tyranny in rules which allowed him — without speaking of his farces and great comedies in prose — to write, in the same genre, *L'Ecole des femmes*, *Tartuffe* and *Le Misanthrope*! — Among all these rules, we must except that of the *three unities*. Corneille perhaps lost something in subjecting himself to it; but Racine found in it the natural frame for the simple action of his dramas.

7° The **language** used by the classical writers, still very rich and bold in the hands of Corneille, Pascal and Bossuet, was reduced in the case of Boileau, Racine and La Rochefoucauld to a vocabulary which was more choice and more abstract. But, at this same time, La Fontaine and Molière exhibited more freedom, and soon La Bruyère made use of an infinitely more varied language. Each writer conserved the individuality of his own language, then, in spite of the Academy, the salons and Vaugelas.—**Style** possessed more general characteristics. With Pascal it became disengaged from Latin syntax, and acquired a high degree of clarity. After 1660, it tended to *naturalness*, that is, the most direct and simple expression of sentiments. It was *noble* only in the *noble* genres, such as tragedy, and funeral orations; but even in those there were many simple passages. Even in the most familiar genres, seventeenth century style had an elegant movement, a decency, a restraint which had come to it from *polite conversation*; it never descended to triviality.

Having thus enumerated the principal external characteristics of *classicism*, we have only made a series of statements: nothing has been explained. In reality, French masterpieces of the seventeenth century were born of some mysterious accord between genius, the right social and political *moment*, and the maturity of the language.

### III.—THE INFLUENCE OF LOUIS XIV.

Beginning with the year 1660, Louis XIV exercised an influence upon letters and arts.

1° He took under his direct protection writers and artists who, until then, had been at the *mercy* of great lords, or of actors and booksellers. In 1663 a pension list was drawn up, in which all the great writers of the time figured, by the side of more mediocre men of letters who then appeared eminently meritorious (1). Louis XIV also pensioned savants and foreign scholars.

2° Louis XIV protected the *French Academy*, and established it in the Louvre.

(1) This list was first made by Chapelain, who had a great reputation as a critic.





PORTRAIT OF LOUIS XIV IN 1676  
After the print engraved by F. de Poilly.

The *Academy of Inscriptions* was founded in 1663; the *Academy of Sciences* in 1666; the *Academy of Painting and Sculpture* was reorganised in 1664, and these academies formed so many centers of study. The *Bibliothèque du roi* (which was to become later on the *Bibliothèque nationale*), was rapidly enriched, and the *cabinet des estampes* and the *cabinet des médailles* were joined to it. It should be remembered that Louis XIV interested himself personally in all these institutions, and gave the *academies* a hierarchical rank in the State; thus establishing the dignity of scientific men and artists, who, unless of distinguished birth, had been until then disdained. Even noblemen who dabbled in science had seemed to lose caste.

3° Louis XIV received writers and artists at court, upon the same footing with the great lords. He esteemed and respected talent. His attitude with regard to Racine, Boileau, even Molière (and we know how great at that time was the prejudice against actors), to Lulli, Mansart, Lebrun, Mignard, was not that of an arrogant master. The first he appointed councillors of State, and historiographers; and though he did not perhaps receive Molière at his table, he defended him from the dangerous reprisals of the courtiers and the false devotees. Others he ennobled. Between the king and them was no barrier, no formulary; and this sovereign, always thought to have been imprisoned in etiquette, was more easily accessible to them than a Minister of State to-day.

4° Louis XIV was never mistaken in his preferences, and the writers whom he encouraged and distinguished were the really greatest of the century. With respect to Corneille, we always remember that the king permitted him to die poor, and forget that he caused representations of a whole series of his plays to be given at court, and gave his youngest son a benefice. He selected Bossuet as tutor to his son, and Fénelon as tutor to his grandson. He confided the great official funeral orations to the talent of Bossuet; ten times he summoned Bourdaloue to the royal pulpit, notwithstanding the severe truths this preacher told the court; he consulted men of renown, and critics like Boileau. When the latter told him that the author who reflected most honour upon his reign was Molière, he replied, "I do not think so; *but you understand those things better than I do.*" The fact was that Louis XIV, before his misfortunes began, was saved from all exaggerations and errors by his *well-balanced* mind; and to this all his contemporaries testify, even Saint-Simon.

5° He had, perhaps too much, a taste for the grand and noble, and this was particularly bad as an influence upon the arts. But it had no effect upon Bossuet or Racine, who remained true to themselves. Molière also continued to be the most original writer of his time, and yet always gave pleasure to the king. La Fontaine gained when, desiring the king's favour, he renounced the *gauloiserie* of his *Contes* and wrote the *Fables*. Only mediocre writers became pompous and inflated, but this was of slight importance.

6° It was not unreasonable that all these writers should have paid the price

of some amount of flattery for the king's efficacious and necessary protection; but we should know how to interpret this in relation to the period, not forgetting that these flatteries were addressed to a victorious king who incarnated the idea of the fatherland.

#### IV. — THE PUBLIC IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

**Whether Classical Literature is exclusively the Product of Polite Society.** — Taine said: "The whole of our classical literature is a Social literature, born of Society, and made for Society." This is a too sweeping judgment, but it contains much truth, for, indeed, all the writers of every genre wished to please *polite society*. — Tragedy renounced the freedom and inequality of the drama to concentrate more and more upon a psychological problem, and was almost always founded upon love, as the sentiment best understood. Among inferior writers of tragedy, this love was often nothing more than gallantry, more pleasing still. — Comedy applied itself for the most part to depicting the ridiculous side of Society; Molière was the "law-giver for the manners of society." — Lyric poetry was reduced to the genres known as "*de société*": for the blooming of individual and impassioned sentiment, it is necessary to find readers not fashioned by the spirit of the salons, more likely to give themselves up to entirely personal impressions. — Satire had more success, but was obliged to avoid all violence. — Didactic poetry, elegant and intellectual, was welcomed. — Pulpit eloquence was at the height of its brilliance. — Novels were idealistic or psychological, and full of allusions. — All these genres appealed to ordinary sentiments, contained a general moral, banished theories, cases, examples too special or too bold. Their style was restrained and distinguished; and was at one with the *taste* of a small number of listeners and readers forming the same public.

But this tendency to satisfy *worldly society* did not lead to any appreciable defect in the great writers of the time, nor, to any extent, has it put their works out of fashion. This is due to the genius of the authors and to the intelligence of a public, homogenous, though made up of contradictory elements, one correcting the other: the *court* and the *town*.

**The Court.** — It was for political reasons, and to destroy forever every trace of their independence, that Louis XIV attracted the nobility to his court and retained them there, where they ruined themselves and were dependent upon his favour. The royal power was strengthened, but the vital forces of the nation were weakened. Literary culture increased hourly among the most refined public that ever existed. As the preceding generation had known the brilliance of Mme de Rambouillet, Mme de Longueville, Mme de Chevreuse, and Mme de

Sablé, it was now the turn of Henriette d'Angleterre, Duchess d'Orléans, Mme de la Fayette, Mme de Sévigné, Mme de Caylus, the most intelligent, best educated and most acute of women. The first group mixed in politics and theological controversy, the second were preeminently women, and it is to them and their type that is owing the superiority of French conversation; it was for them that the great writers of their time were all intellectual and profound.

The courtiers at the Louvre and Versailles were not all coxcombs or fops. Some of them were named Colbert, Louvois, de Lionne, Montausier, Saint-Simon, La Rochefoucauld, Condé, Turenne, Luxembourg, Vendôme... There has never been seen, at any time, a group of great lords who, by heredity and personal genius, were more capable than these of judging and encouraging letters.

But we must not forget that, under this exquisite politeness, still boiled and bubbled the blood of the Frondeurs; that men's natures were impassioned: that never has there been such a mixture of rough, almost coarse private morals with such polite manners. This was far from the refinement of the end of the eighteenth century, when characters, as well as bodies, were weakened by a corrupt civilization. In 1660 there was *equipoise*, and the Versailles courtiers were to be the conquerors of Franche-Comté, Flanders and Alsace, and to vanquish Europe for thirty years.

**The Bourgeoisie.** — It must not be supposed that the court was the only judge of good books. Facing the *court*, was the *town*.

Education was widely spread among the bourgeoisie. While the nobility ruined themselves in the service of the king, the citizens made their fortunes; their children received the best education, and issued forth highly cultured from the colleges of the University or of the Jesuits. Some *official position* or *charge* was bought for them, and becoming financiers, magistrates, men of letters, these citizens formed a definite part of the public. Molière frequently invokes the testimony of the *parterre*. And, curiously enough, he does not point out any difference between their taste and that of the *court* (the real court, not that of the *marquis turlupins*), but, on the contrary, mixes in the same eulogy those who have paid half a louis d'or for their place and those who have only paid a piece of fifteen *sols*. As spectators or readers, these cultured citizens made the success of Corneille, Boileau, Molière, La Fontaine. They esteemed the *common* sense of Bossuet, and the *logic* of Bourdaloue. And, as they were in general better educated than the people at court, as they had preserved an old foundation of *gauloiserie*, in the best meaning of the word, they preferred what was most serious and most national in the works of the great classicists.

Thus the public was composed of two elements which balanced each other.





THE FAÇADE OF THE CASTLE AT VERSAILLES IN 1674, VIEW FROM THE GREEN CARPET

After the print engraved by Israël Silvestre (1621-1691).

## V. — ARTS AND SCIENCES.

**Arts.** — Seventeenth century architecture, though not equal in value to that of the Middle Ages or of the Renaissance, has nevertheless much originality : above all it has nobleness and harmony. The colonnade of the Louvre, constructed by **Claude Perrault** (1665-1670); the Château of Versailles, by **Hardouin Mansart** (1670-1682); the Hôtel des Invalides, by **Libéral Bruand** (1674-1675), and many other monuments impress by their dimensions, and charm the eye by their majestic elegance.— Religious art was less successful; the *Jesuit* style (copied from the *Gesù* at Rome) was an unpleasing novelty. We may praise, on the other hand, the domes of the Val-de-Grâce and of the Invalides.

In sculpture, the same taste was shown for noble attitudes and elegant accessories. With the exception of **Pierre Puget** (1622-1694), **Girardon** (1628-1675), and **Coysevox** (1640-1720), who had genius, the other sculptors, like **Nicolas** and **Guillaume Coustou**, sacrificed too much to a *theatrical taste*.

This taste was still more evident in painting.— We must except, however, the painters of the first half of the century, who were simpler and truer : **Nicolas Poussin** (1594-1665), **Claude Lorrain** (1600-1682), **Eustache Le Sueur** (1616-1655). The first two were formed in the school of Italian masters; the last is the most sincerely religious of all French painters. Exception must also be made for the Jansenist painter, **Philippe de Champagne**, whose portraits are at once those of an accomplished artist and thinker. But the true "Louis XIV painting" is that of **Le Brun** (1619-1690), and **Mignard** (1610-1695). Le Brun, who exercised a kind of tyranny over all the painters of his time, is especially celebrated for his *Batailles d'Alexandre*, the pompousness of which should not make us oblivious of the merits of its design and colour. Mignard, more personal, was more influenced by the Italian school. He has more grace than Le Brun, but also a certain *mannerism*. We should also mention such admirable portrait painters as **Largillière** and **Rigaud** (1).

**Sciences.** — Some great discoveries were made in the seventeenth century. **Descartes** applied algebra to geometry. In astronomy, it was the epoch of **Kepler**, **Galileo** and **Newton** : and all the essential laws were discovered, above all, the Law of *Gravity*. The *meridian* was measured in 1670; *maps of the heavens* were made; and, thanks to the perfecting of the telescope, a greater number of planets and fixed stars were discovered and classified. The Observatory was built in 1671.

Much progress was made also in Physics, through the experiments of **Torricelli**, repeated in France by **Pascal** in 1648. The air pump was invented, and the principle of the steam engine discovered (**Denis Papin** 1682).

(1) ROGER PEYRE, *Hist. générale des Beaux-Arts*, Paris, Delagrave.

In natural science must be mentioned the name of **Tournefort** (1656-1708), a learned Botanist:—in medicine, **Harvey**, who discovered in 1619 the circulation of the blood, etc.

In short, the seventeenth century was not less great in its scientific range than in the number of its literary masterpieces. But it must be admitted that most of the scientific development was foreign.

## VI. — EXTRINSIC INFLUENCES.

Among the historical and social influences which acted upon writers, and



THE FOUNDING OF "The Gazette of France"

After an allegorical print of the XVII century.

The messengers bringing the news of the world to "la Vérité" who transmits them to Renaudot.

which may have modified their ideas and their style at certain times, the following should be cited :

1<sup>o</sup> *The religious quarrels*, Jansenism, Quietism, the persecution of Protestants. Their effect is felt in the work of the greatest writers. Not only Bossuet, Pascal, Fénelon, but Racine and Boileau were strongly influenced by the religious troubles.

2<sup>o</sup> *The reverses and misery of the end of the reign.* — That reader fails to comprehend Fénelon or La Bruyère who does not hear in their work a painful echo of the decadence of their great century. Still more is this true of Saint-Simon.

3° *Foreign literatures.* — Italian literature, with the *Cavaliere Marino* and the authors of pastorals (*Tasso*, *Guarini*), influenced the first half of the seventeenth century. Corneille and his contemporaries imitated the dramatic literature of Spain, which was then at its most brilliant period (*Cervantes* died in 1616; *Guilhen de Castro* in 1630; *Lope de Vega* in 1635; *Alarcon* in 1639; *Tirso de Molina* in 1648; *Calderon* in 1681). Comic drama continued to follow Spanish models until the end of the century. — But from 1660 France may be said to have freed herself from foreign literatures. Molière had begun by imitating the Italians, but (except a return to Spanish influence in his *Don Juan*) he was French. La Fontaine at first translated Boccaccio and Ariosto; but in his *Fables* he is no longer a disciple except of the ancients. Neither Racine, Boileau nor any of the great French prose writers was inspired by foreign models; and nothing could more effectually prove to what an extent French national genius had come into its own.

Meanwhile, in England *Shakespeare* died in 1616; *Bacon* in 1626; *Milton* published his *Paradise Lost* in 1667; *Dryden* wrote his tragedies and critical works; *Locke* published in 1690 his *Essay on the Human Understanding*. But it was only in the eighteenth century that all these great English writers penetrated into France.



THE FAME OF THE ARMS OF THE FRANCE AND OF CONDÉ

After a print of Jean Lepautre (1618-1682)





DECORATIVE FRIEZE BY JEAN LEPAUTRE (1618-1682).

## CHAPTER II.

### THE REFORMATION OF POETRY.

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#### MALHERBE, HIS DISCIPLES, HIS ADVERSARIES.

##### SUMMARY

1° About the year 1600, readers were tired of the too learned and too fanciful poetry of Ronsard's disciples. The public was disposed to welcome poetry of a more reasonable and simple nature.

2° **MALHERBE** (1555-1628) began by imitating Ronsard and the Italians, and then displayed his own originality in his *Stances à du Périer*, his *Odes* to Marie de Médicis, to Henri IV and Louis XIII.—He **reformed** poetry by reacting against an exaggerated imitation of the ancients, in imposing the use of the pure Parisian French, and in regulating versification.—His influence was due to the concord between his energetic talent and the aspirations of his contemporaries.

3° His true disciples were to be the poets of the classical period (1660-1685); but his immediate disciples were **RACAN** and **MAYNARD**.

4° Malherbe had opponents, the most celebrated of whom were: **VAUQUELIN DE LA FRESNAYE**, author of an *Art Poétique* (1605), **DESPORTES**, **BERTAUT**, **MATHURIN REGNIER** (1573-1613), author of remarkable satires, showing a penetrating power of observation and a picturesque and vigorous style; he attacked Malherbe in his ninth satire dedicated to N. Rapin, **THÉOPHILE DE VIAU** (1590-1626), a very personal lyricist, **SAINT-AMANT**, **CYRANO DE BERGERAC**.



DECORATED LETTER

by Abraham-Bosse, (1602-1676).

ONSARD and the Pleiad had already reformed poetry; why, then, had Malherbe to reform it once more, and why was this second reformation more durable than the first?

### Condition of French poetry about 1600. —

We have seen to what extent the ideas and works of Ronsard were reasonable and in conformity with French genius, and also to what extent they were deciduous. His qualities were a noble arrangement, strength and precision, eloquence, a taste for the general ideas found in the ancients, and for mythological symbolism; his faults were a timid imitation of the Greeks and Latins, an altogether Italian affectation, a composite language often unintelligible to men of the world. In reality, Ronsard, carried away by his own genius, had done violence to the spirit of the French language. His disciples, the d'Aubigné and du Bartas, had exaggerated his faults, with the result that the public grew weary, and gradually indifferent. From this resulted the success of second-rate poets like Desportes and Bertaut, in whose work readers were pleased to find merits altogether French. Everything tended at that time, in ideas as well as in politics, to unity and rules. A man of great talent, capable of satisfying these aspirations, must inevitably please. This man, aided by circumstances, and owing his fame much less to the intrinsic value of his works than to their opportuneness, was Malherbe.

## I. — MALHERBE (1555-1628).

**Biography and Character.** — François de Malherbe belonged to a Norman family. His father was counsellor to the *Présidial* of Caen, and it was there Malherbe was born, in 1555, the eldest of nine children. After studying law, and completing his course at the universities of Heidelberg and Bâle, he exchanged the gown for the sword, like Corneille's *Dorante*, and became a follower of Henri d'Angoulême, Grand Prior of France and lieutenant to the governor of Provence. Little is known of this period of his life. According to himself—for this Norman boasted like a Gascon—Malherbe did marvellously well during the religious wars: and this is possible. He married at Aix, in 1581, the daughter of a magistrate, Madeleine de Coriolis, and had three children, two of whom died young. His last son, Marc-Antoine, was killed in a duel, and Malherbe, then seventy-one years old, in vain demanded satisfaction or vengeance.

In 1603, Malherbe went to Paris, with recommendations to Henri IV from Cardinal du Perron. The latter is supposed to have said to the king, "that it



FRANÇOIS DE MALHERBE

After the original portrait painted in 1613 by Finson and engraved by I. Coelemans.

mattered not who should write verse after that of a nobleman of Normandy, established in Provence, named Malherbe, for he had raised French poetry to so high a point that no one could ever approach him". Malherbe had written much verse, some frankly bad and in Ronsard's worst style, and some half good, half bad, (*Les Larmes de Saint Pierre*, 1587), while some of his work already gave evidence of his masculine talent and his clear language (*Ode à Marie de Médicis pour sa bienvenue en France*, 1600; *Stances à du Périer sur la mort de sa fille*, 1601). He presented to Henri IV his fine *Prière pour le roi Henri le Grand, allant en Limousin* (1605); and the king, without attaching him directly to his person, confided him to his first gentleman of the chamber, M. de Bellegarde.

Malherbe had now become almost official poet to the court. He composed, for Henri IV, a few fine *Odes* (*Sur l'attentat du Pont-Neuf*, 1606), and a great many *stanzas*, *sonnets* and *chansons*, which revealed him as a servile courtier. And it may here be admitted that Malherbe, whose portraits are so attractive, whose verses have such a proud ring, seems to have been somewhat lacking in nobility, at least, from that day when he regarded poetry merely as a "means of success." He did not esteem his talent; he said that "a good poet is about as useful to the state as a good player at ninepins." He flattered in his verses all the powerful personages, and denied them, or withdrew himself prudently, the moment he felt that they were in disgrace; as he did in the case of Marshal d'Ancre, the Duke de Luynes, and in the case of Marie de Médicis herself. The latter, and Louis XIII became generous patrons of the poet after the death of Henri IV; and Malherbe wrote for the Regent and her son his finest pieces: *Ode à la Reine Marie de Médicis sur les heureux succès de sa régence* (1610); *Ode au roi Louis XIII allant châtier les Rochellois* (1627).

Thanks to his interesting correspondence with his friend Peiresc (published in 1822), we know how Malherbe passed his time, between the court, the Muses and his disciples, during his long sojourn in Paris. He only travelled twice to Provence, where Madame Malherbe had remained. Racan tells us that his master occupied a modest furnished room, where he only had seven or eight chairs, and here he assembled his disciples: Colomby, Maynard, Racan, de Monstier, Yvrande, etc. To those who arrived late, he would cry through the door: "Wait, there are no more chairs!" His sallies are famous. He said to Desportes, "Your soup is worth more than your verses." To the confessor who, at his death-bed, spoke to him of eternal life, he said, "Do not talk about it any more, your wretched style gives me a disgust for it." When at the point of expiring, he severely reproved his nurse, as he wished "to defend with his last breath the purity of the French language." He died October 16, 1628.

**Malherbe's Reforms.** — In studying Malherbe's poetic theories, we are somewhat surprised to find chiefly negative precepts. In fact, Malherbe only reacted



against the Pleiad, and restored to French poetry its essentially national qualities. Only upon versification does he give a few positive rules. We know that he had made erasures from one end to another in a copy of Ronsard, and a copy of Desportes exists showing Malherbe's annotations; but he left no written *theory of poetry*, nor of grammar. For a study of his reforms we are obliged to study traditions, anecdotes, and especially his poetry (1).

1° Malherbe reacted, in every respect, against an *exaggerated imitation* of the ancients in French poetry. He himself doubtless knew them well, and had made prose translations of Livy (XXIII book), and of Seneca (*Questions naturelles*). But he believed that only general ideas and commonplaces should be borrowed from them, never technical details, *bearing their own date*, and which remove poetry beyond the comprehension of men of the world. Moreover, he distrusted the Greeks, turning instinctively towards the Latins, who are more reasonable and more in conformity with French genius. Without completely proscribing mythology, which he had made use of himself, he only asked of it a few ornaments (comparisons, metaphors).—He protested equally against *Italianism*, which continued to render poetry insipid and obscure; and he fought with all his strength against the influence of the famous *Cavaliere Marino*, who was his rival in the favour of Marie de Médicis.—In short, Malherbe stood for common sense, *reason*, current ideas and current subjects, as against fancy, imagination, symbolism and inventions.

2° *Style and Language*.—Malherbe compelled his disciples, and himself as well, to work slowly and “with difficulty, to make easy verses.” It is said that he used a ream of paper to make one stanza; no matter, if the stanza be fine. This was the theory re-adopted and confirmed by Boileau, and by the example of all the great classics.—Régnier protested; he believed in “letting the pen run where the spirit led it”; he said, “Genius does everything easily”; and he rallied Malherbe as “slow in imagining”. All the same, Malherbe's theory is that of all the greatest artists, whose inspiration never destroys their critical sense. So we have logic, clarity, severe propriety as characteristics of Malherbe's style.—The language of poetry should be *purely French*. He had to fight *pedantry* and *Italianism*, and finally, the invasion of the *Parisian French* by the provincial dialects. Thence arises the profound truth of his sally: “In the matter of language, the porters of Port-au-Foin are our masters.” He did not mean that people should speak like porters, but that, in order to judge of the exclusively *French* quality of any term, we must be sure that the word exists in old popular speech, and that it is in usage by those who have neither the pedantry of the learned nor the snobbishness of high society. If he did adopt the *vocabulary* of the porters, in syntax he was an ultra purist, and referred everything, like Vaugelas, to *good usage*.

(1) *Histoire de la littérature française* (JULLEVILLE, Colin), vol. IV, p. 15.

3° *Versification*. — Malherbe regulated and disciplined the alexandrine, insisting upon a pause (principal or secondary) after the sixth foot; prohibiting *overrunning*, which might spoil the general rhythm of a series of verses, and forbidding the *hiatus* (the meeting of a final vowel with an initial one).

On the other hand, he was very strict concerning *rhyme*; he thought it should be, if not always *rich*, at least sufficiently difficult to be a check upon too rapid writing. So, he prescribed the *consonne d'appui* for the participles in *é* (three-fourths of the French conjugation consisting of verbs ending in *er*, the poet would avail himself of too many easy rhymes);—he forbade the rhyming of a simple with a compound word (*père, grand-père*), or of words too nearly alike in meaning (*père, mère*).

**Malherbe's Influence.** — We should guard against ascribing a *personal* influence such as that of Ronsard, to Malherbe. But, precisely because the latter had less genius, and only formulated the tendencies of the French mind, his work remained longer in fashion, and his influence was more lasting. Boileau (who, besides, as we should observe, only praises his style, did not exaggerate when he said: "*Everybody accepted his laws...*" He expressed a fact. Clarity, reason, order, purity and propriety of language, the substantial harmony of verse, in short, all that we praise in Racine, Molière and their imitators, found its first outline in Malherbe. It should be understood that to these very general and almost negative qualities, each poet has added those of his own genius; and Malherbe was like a *teacher* of design and perspective whose pupils some day become great painters.

Must it be admitted, furthermore, that Malherbe "cut poetry's throat"? As if the influence of one man, and only a man of talent at that, could prevent the development of a great lyric genius if such a one presented himself! But what is not true of Malherbe, is true of seventeenth century society. An independent lyric genius could not have found there either the elements of poetry, or, above all, prepared readers. This is a question of time and *season*.

## II. — MALHERBE'S DISCIPLES.

"Among Malherbe's disciples, those who do him most honour," as Petit de Julleville very justly says, "are those whom he never knew: the great writers of the second half of the seventeenth century, all of whom, whether poets or prose-writers, recognised his mastery and indirectly submitted to his discipline (1)." However, Racan and Maynard should be mentioned in this connection, and were among his personal pupils.

(1) *Histoire de la littérature française*, JULLEVILLE, Colin, vol. IV, p. 45.

**HONORAT DE BUEIL, LORD OF RACAN** (1589-1670), survived his master long enough to see the almost complete triumph of his doctrines. He was a cousin of the Duke de Bellegarde, Malherbe's patron. Officer, then country nobleman, he retired to his château of the Roche-Racan, in Touraine, where he led the ample and easy life of an "honnête homme", (gentleman) who wrote verse simply for diversion. We notice later his dramatic pastoral, *Les Bergeries*, played in 1648. He published *Odes*, *Psalms* and *Stanzas*, which show a sincere feeling for nature, and a gentle melancholy. His verses are supple and harmonious, and somewhat tame (1).

**FRANÇOIS MAYNARD** (1582-1646) was, according to Malherbe, the best maker of verses among his disciples. His *épigrammes* are smooth and witty; his *Odes* possess some fine ideas, daintily without being affected, and occasionally, as in *La Belle Vieille*, profoundly touching in sentiment. He wrote verses with genuinely French facility; his rhymes are exact, without ever causing him trouble (2).

### III. — MALHERBE'S ADVERSARIES.

Malherbe's other disciples do not concern us; but we have to consider the opposition party, Ronsard's, which had never disarmed, and was evidently the most numerous and powerful. "Literature between 1600 and 1630," says E. Faguel, "was a romantic literature, and especially was poetry a romantic poetry, in which imagination, caprice and fancy dominated, sometimes in disorder. In its midst, Malherbe stood alone, with hardly two



PORTRAIT OF RACAN

After the print engraved by Desrochers.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 290.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 294.

disciples, and they themselves independent enough; and yet, curious as it is, though happening sometimes in literature, he founded a school, and a great one, though about forty years after his death (1).

This group of *ronsardisants* was composed essentially of the following poets: Vauquelin de la Fresnaye, Desportes, Bertaut, d'Aubigné (whom we have already studied, and who died in 1630), Mathurin Régnier, Théophile de Viau, Saint-Amant, Cyrano de Bergerac. Scarron should also be connected with them; but we shall revert again to him in our study of plays and novels.

**VAUQUELIN DE LA FRESNAYE** (1535-1607) seemed, at the end of the sixteenth century, like a rough sketch of Racan, because of his character, his country life and the subject of his *Foresteries* and *Idillies*. His most remarkable work is an *Art poétique* (1605) in which, though setting forth the principles inspired by Ronsard, he foretells a more natural and sensible poetry.

**DESPORTES** (1546-1606) was loaded with riches and honours by Henri III and Henri IV. Very well off himself, he was extremely generous towards men of letters, whom he received and lodged in his country house at Vanves. He was an uncle of Mathurin Régnier. Desportes was the real precursor of Malherbe, who, however, did not esteem him. He is distinguished by a certain precision of thought, style and versification; and, though a great admirer of Ronsard, his work should be classed with the best of Marot. His language is pure, and though he imitates Italian conceits; he always writes French (2).

**BERTAUT** (1552-1611) was chief chaplain to Marie de Médicis, and Bishop of Séz. He composed *hymns*, *elegies* and *epistles*. He has more tenderness and sentiment than Desportes, and some of his pieces evince a profound melancholy somewhat rare at this period. A few beautiful stanzas of his will always be quoted (3).

**MATHURIN RÉGNIER** (1573-1613).—Nephew of Desportes, Régnier was destined for the Church from his infancy; and it was hoped that he would come into possession of one of his uncle's rich abbeys. In 1587 he was attached to the person of Cardinal de Joyeuse, whom he accompanied on his frequent journeys to Rome. But, for some unknown reason, he did not succeed in pleasing his powerful master, and he returned to Paris where he seems to have led rather a vagabond life. At his uncle's death he inherited nothing; and finally, he only succeeded in getting, thanks to the Marquis de Cocuvres, a pension of two thousand livres (francs) from the Abbey des Vaux de Cernay, and later on a canonry at Chartres (1609). His premature death prevented him from en-

(1) EMILE FAGUET, *Hist. de la litt. fr.* (Plon), II, 2.

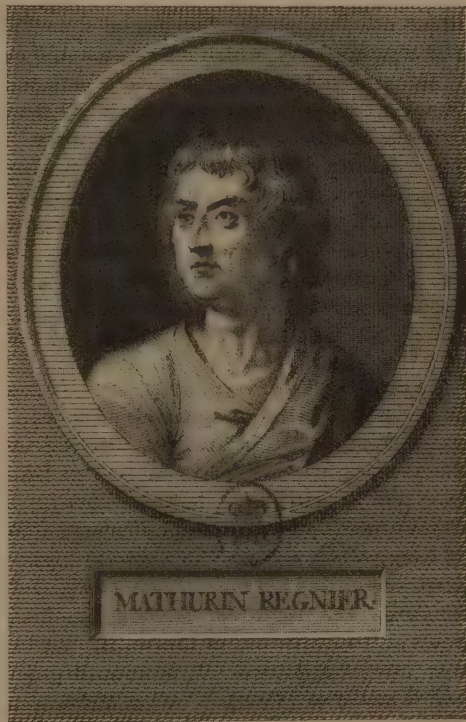
(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 184.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 187.



joying for long a repose during which he might perhaps have brought to perfection his natural gift for poetry.

**Régnier's Satires.** — Régnier composed sixteen satires, the chief of which are :—II. *Les Poètes* (a piquant picture of the poet's life, such as it is, and such as Régnier would have it. It is full of picturesque verses (1); and must be read for a knowledge of the literary world of his time, and for his own theories).—III. *La Vie de Cour* (may be compared with the *Poète courtois* of du Bellay).—VI. *L'Honneur* (against *El Punto de honor*).—VIII. *L'Importun* or *Le Fâcheux* (imitated from Horace).—IX. A *Nicolas Rapin* (against Malherbe).—X. *Le Souper ridicule* (may be compared with Boileau).—XII. *Son Apologie* (theory of satire, may be compared with Boileau).—XIII. *Macette*, or *L'Hypocrite*.—XV. *Le Poète malgré soi* (Régnier defines his manner of writing as entirely impulsive, and his mind as incapable of disguising the truth. (This may be compared with Boileau.)



PORTRAIT OF MATHURIN RÉGNIER

After the print engraved in the XVIII century  
by Saint-Aubin.

This picture does not present all the genuine guaranties; it seems to resemble rather a head of character, instead of a portrait.

**Régnier's Originality.** — As a satirist, Régnier had numerous masters. First of all—not because he knew them, but by a sort of mysterious heredity—the *gaulois* poets of the Middle Ages, from Jean de Meun and the authors of *fabliaux* to Villon; Marot, whose naïve subtlety he, too, displayed in several good passages of genuine satire in his *coq-à-l'âne*; du Bellay, who was the first to compose a satire (*Le Poète courtois*), the form of which was to remain the classical model down to the nineteenth century; and above all the Italian poets whom he studied at Rome during

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 110; 2nd cycle, p. 297

his eight years' sojourn there :—and to what extent he was indebted to the Italians we have now learned from M. J. Vianey (1). But these models were available for everybody, and it was only R  gnier's own special gifts which enabled him to draw such original satires from them : his acuteness of observation, developed from infancy, he tells us, by his father, a sense of the picturesque and the real which no other poet had possessed since Villon, except perhaps Rabelais ; a brisk and copious fancy, which offers a marked contrast to the dryness of Malherbe.

We must not seek in R  gnier's satires either a system of *philosophy* or of *morality* : at most it is the morals of Horace, who condemns, in the name of ridicule, certain entirely external vices—except in the portrait of Macette.—Thus, in satire III, the portrait of the courtier, with its piquant details which seem to be so many directions for making a print, or for a theatrical role ;—In satire X (*Repas ridicule*), the portrait of the untidy pedant, doubtless a bit forced, like a Callot print, but in such high relief, and unforgettable ;—In satire XIII, the famous portrait of Macette, the hypocrite. The latter is R  gnier's masterpiece ; in this the moral analysis is completely at one with the physical description, and this elder sister of Tartuffe is a creation of genius.

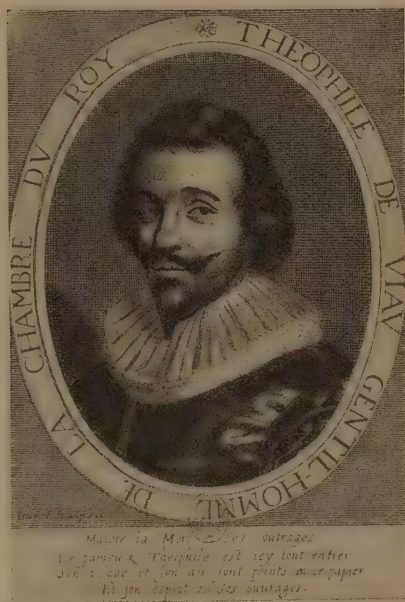
**R  gnier as Literary Critic.** — A part of R  gnier's work is entirely *literary* and *critical*. Without speaking of certain details here and there in his work, satire IX, *A Rapin*, is a regular brief against Malherbe and his school. In fact, R  gnier represents the free French tradition of individual and fantastic poetry ; and this is why he is both the disciple of Villon and of Ronsard. R  gnier's attacks bear upon two essential points : Malherbe, weak of *invention*, and slow of *imagination*, refuses the poet the right to let himself go *wherever his spirit carries him* ; and, in the second place, Malherbe seeks trivial quarrels with the language and metre of writers like Ronsard, du Bellay, Desportes, who are poets in the true sense of the word. As to Malherbe, he is only a grammarian, a *scraper* of syllables. If, besides, R  gnier reproaches Malherbe with wishing *to talk as the street-porters talk at Saint-Jean*, while R  gnier himself is still more trivial in his language, it is because R  gnier evidently implies the use of *intentional dullness* rather than that of popular language ; and this is again a vindication of the liberty of the poet, who should be able to use, at his will and according to his subjects, all vocabularies and styles. With this we may compare Mlle de Gournay's protest, at that same period.

**R  gnier's Style.** — R  gnier is an excellent writer, and since Rabelais there had not occurred any other example of such a rich and picturesque vocabulary, in which the word created so successfully an image or a picture. R  gnier knew, like Malherbe—and in one sense better than he did—the value of *the word set in its right place*. He wrote marvellous dialogues like a comic poet ; he com-

(1) J. VIANEY, *Mathurin R  gnier* (Hachette), 1896.

posed a *couplet* (on Macette, for instance), like Molière. And when impulse or anger sustained him, he reached the eloquence of a d'Aubigné. But when he wished to reason, or define, or moralise, his syntax is heavy and embarrassed. We can see that he had not the courage, or the talent, to correct his works.

**THÉOPHILE DE VIAU** (1590-1626), had a very troubled and unfortunate life. Suspected of *free-thinking*, and of being the author of impious poems, he was imprisoned and exiled, and died young. He had in his lifetime, and a few years after his death, a wide reputation; and, as we shall see later, his tragedy of *Pyrame et Thisbé* (1617) was much applauded. But he was specially remarkable for his *odes* and *élégies*, in which he proved himself, more than any other of his time, a true *lyrical poet*. His poems *Le Matin* and *La Solitude* will always be quoted, for their exquisite feeling for nature, and their extremely personal quality (1). His love poems strike us as singularly sincere, in the midst of the gallant and vapid poetry of the time. Théophile wrote, furthermore, with a facility which was sometimes successful, sometimes careless. He said, writing against Malherbe, "An able mind does everything easily" (2). E. Faguet says of de Viau: "He possessed fine poetic genius, but very ill-regulated and freakish. He was full of imagination and wit (3)."



PORTRAIT OF THÉOPHILE DE VIAU  
 After the print engraved by P. Daret.

The fame of **SAINT-AMAND** (1594-1661) was compromised for ever by a few verses from the pen of Boileau. And perhaps it would have been better had he never written his long poem *Moïse*. In that case, his lyric and elegiac poems would be better known and more highly esteemed. In these, his work as a poet is complete, characterised by high relief, realism, and an accurate feeling for nature. He, too, wrote a *Solitude*, more

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 310.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 312.

(3) *Hist. de la litt. fr.* (Plon), vol. II, p. 23.

highly coloured than the poem by Théophile, and an other piece entitled *Le Contempleteur*, which is worthy of being mentioned and preserved (1).

**CYRANO DE BERGERAC** (1619-1655) was the finished type of the independent, eccentric poet. Endowed with a vivid and fantastic imagination, full of bad taste and of amusing inventions, he attained, in his *Agrippine* (1653) to tragic power, and to comic power in his *Pédant joué* (1654) (2). But he is chiefly known for his *Histoire comique des États de la Lune et du Soleil*, where he seems a precursor of Swift. "Cyrano is interesting in the history of literature," says E. Faguet, "because he represents, more than other man of his time, a tendency which nearly all of them had, a philosophical, materialistic or naturalistic tendency, as you will, closely analogous to that of the eighteenth century (3)."

We shall take up later, in speaking of the condition of poetry at the moment when Boileau began to write his satires (1660), a few burlesque or affected poets, who were the continuators of the work of this first generation. But here it suffices us to understand to what an extent Malherbe was at first refuted or misunderstood, and by poets who, for the most part, had more genius than himself. His definite triumph about 1660 is only the more significant.

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(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 307.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 514.

(3) E. FAGUET, *loc. cit.*, p. 28.



BOTTOM OF A LAMP DECORATED  
By Sebastian Le Clerc (1637-1714).





DECORATIVE FRIEZE BY JEAN LEPAUTRE (1618-1682).

### CHAPTER III.

## PHILOSOPHICAL AND SOCIAL INFLUENCES.

### DESCARTES. — THE ACADEMY. — THE HOTEL DE RAMBOUILLET.

#### SUMMARY

Several influences combined to form classical literature..

1° **DESCARTES** (1596-1650) by his *Discours de la méthode* (1637) renovated philosophy by applying to it the method of mathematical sciences. He taught his contemporaries to use their **reason**. He was the first to write in **French** on a philosophical subject. His personal influence upon classicism should not be exaggerated, but he helped to determine the essential characteristics of French genius during this period.

2° **THE FRENCH ACADEMY** resulted from literary reunions held in the house of Conrart. Richelieu organised the Academy, which set to work upon a *Dictionary*, which appeared in 1694, and began to pass judgment upon new works (*Le Cid*). The Academy was a salon in which men of letters and great lords met and mutually instructed one another.

3° **THE HOTEL DE RAMBOUILLET**.—Catherine de Vivonne, marquise de Rambouillet received, from 1618 to 1660, the most distinguished society and most celebrated writers. She taught her contemporaries **politeness** of manners and language. This politeness degenerated into **affectation**, especially at Mlle de Scudéry's and in provincial salons.

4° **BALZAC** (1594-1664) wrote from Rome and from his château *Letters* upon moral and literary subjects. He was **eloquent** but not very natural; his style was serious and harmonious.

5° **VOÏTURE** (1598-1648) was for twenty years the "centre of the circle" at the Hôtel de Rambouillet. He had as much imagination as he had talent wherewith to amuse this society. His *Letters* are piquant, and often have mannerisms; his verses are facile and witty.

6° **VAUGELAS** worked on the *Academy Dictionary*, and published in 1647 his *Remarques sur la Langue française*.



DECORATED LETTER  
of the XVII century.

ANY forces, contradictory in appearance, united to form classicism : philosophy, literary taste, the best society. From these resulted a harmony entirely characteristic of the seventeenth century, which knew how to combine in its masterpieces depth, method, purity of language, elegance and clarity.

## I. — DESCARTES (1596-1650).

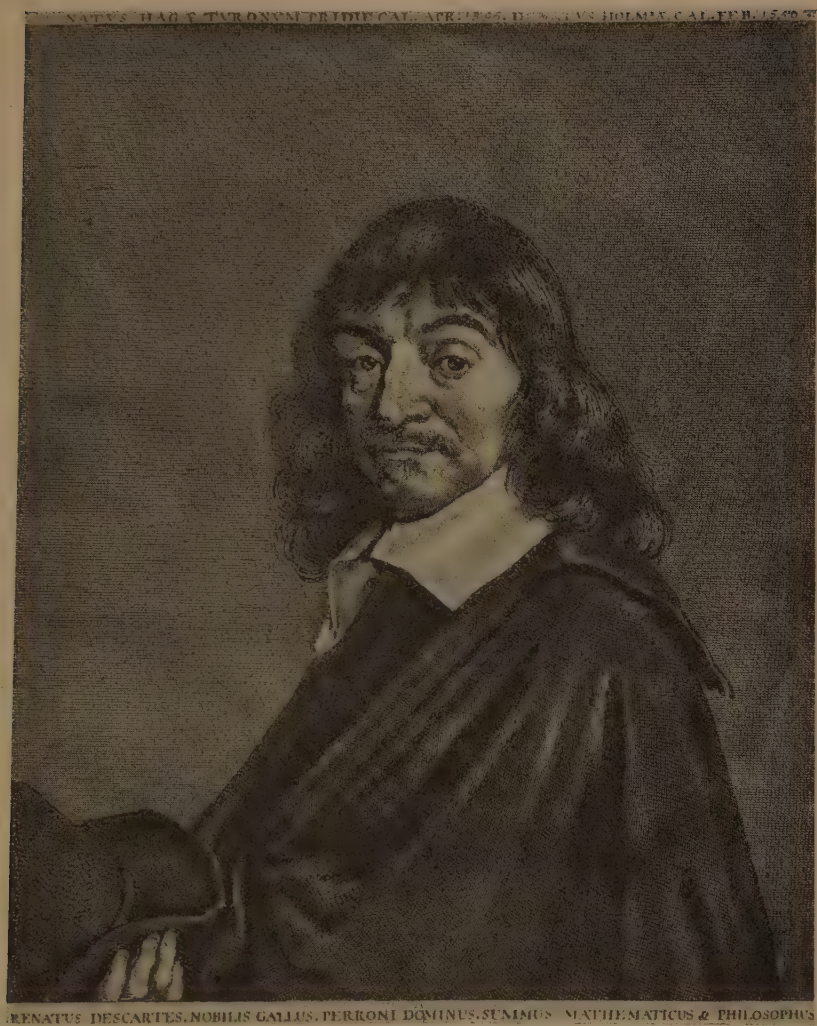
**Biography.**—René Descartes was born at La Haye, between Tours and Poitiers (1), in 1596, of a noble family. He was placed at the Jesuit college of La Flèche, and those pages are well-known in his *Discours de la méthode* in which he speaks of his masters, to whom he always showed gratitude and respect, although he criticised their teaching (2). Descartes afterwards went to Paris, where he studied law; then, wishing to consult the “great book of the world,” and in order to travel, he first joined the army of Prince Maurice de Nassau in Holland, then that of the Duke of Bavaria, and took part in the Thirty Years’ War. It was during his first campaign, in 1619, that while living at the commencement of winter in an apartment called a *poêle* (that is, heated by a stove), he meditated so profoundly upon the sources and the object of our knowledge, that he discovered the principles of his method, and the application of algebra to geometry. He went afterwards to Ulm and to Prague, and was a good soldier, though always preoccupied with science and philosophy. He resigned from the service, went to Rome in 1623, and returned to Paris, where he tried to shut himself away from society; but he soon began to take part in learned conferences, where he made a vivid impression. He established himself in Holland in 1629, first at Franeker in the Frise, afterwards at Amsterdam (3). There he wrote the *Discours de la méthode* (1637), the *Méditations* (1641), the *Traité des passions* (1649). This last work was dedicated to Princess Elisabeth, daughter of Frederick V, king of Bohemia. At length he accepted the invitation of Queen Christina of Sweden, to come to Stockholm, but soon died there on February 11, 1650, and his body was brought back to France in 1657.

**The *Discours de la Méthode* (1637).**—Descartes, like Pascal, was first a mathematician. He acquired, in the practice of pure science, that rigour of mind, an absolute confidence in reason, the need of *evidence* and clearness which form the principles of his philosophical reform.—His originality con-

(1) It is now called *La Haye-Descartes*.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 156.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 349.



RENÉ DESCARTES

After the portrait painted by Franz Hals and engraved by I. Suyderhoeff.

sisted in rejecting *authority*, and setting aside the *sylogism*, a method of reasoning which, at most, is only capable of demonstrating a truth which is already admitted, and not of discovering others. Descartes wished us to reason with our *common sense*, that is to say, with our *reason*, "the most equally apportioned thing in the world", but also that one which we know least how to use, through lack of method. Therefore, in his *Discours* he taught us how to reason by means of *analysis* and *synthesis*.

The following are the four rules of Descartes' *method* :

1° "Never to accept any fact as truth which I do not know to be *evidently* truth." It is the *criterion of evidence* substituted for that of authority, and a whole section of modern philosophy is based upon this principle. But it is necessary to know how to seek and recognise the distinctive characteristics of this evidence, and here Descartes introduces the mathematical method of *analysing*, which is his second rule ;

2° "To divide each difficulty into as many parts as possible and as many as would be required in order the better to resolve it." This is how mathematicians proceed when they have a problem to study, to find the *relations* from which they will evolve their *solution*. Descartes simply applied this rule in his analytical *Géométrie*;

3° "To develop my thought in an orderly manner by beginning with those objects which are the most simple and the easiest to know, in order to ascend little by little, as if by steps, to the knowledge of more complicated objects." After *analysis* follows *synthesis*, which reconstructs, by means of *intuition*, what analysis had subdivided.

4° "To make complete enumerations." These *complete lists* are necessary so that no part of the problem shall remain obscure, and that no consequence of its solution shall escape us.

After having thus substituted *mathematical* reasoning for the *scholastic syllogism*, Descartes proceeds to apply it to himself. He clears his mind of all his previous knowledge, and by *methodical doubt* he endeavours to re-find the *evident* principles of a philosophy. But if he *doubts*, he *thinks*, and if he thinks, he *exists* : and this is the famous *Je pense, donc je suis* (*Cogito, ergo sum*). Through his thoughts he is lifted to a knowledge of the soul, then of God : in fact, he has the idea of the *infinite*, which could not come to him of himself, being essentially a limited being, nor from the external world.

We cannot follow Descartes here through the whole system of his philosophy ; it will suffice to note the chief elements. Only we should add that Descartes possessed *psychology* and *ethics* : he sought to determine the reciprocal action of the soul and the body. He analysed the passions, and his moral system is truly *Cornelian* in that it exalts *free will*.

**Descartes as Writer.** — The *Discours de la Méthode* possesses great literary



importance. In 1637, it was the first monument of *philosophical style*. Up to that time, philosophers, like theologians, set forth their doctrines in Latin, and a Latin bristling with technical terms. Descartes, in making use of French, addressed himself not to *philosophers* and *specialists*, but to everybody possessed of *common sense*. No more technical jargon, nor formulas of the school, but a clear, simple and precise statement of new and profound thoughts. This example was to be followed by all philosophical and theological writers of the seventeenth century: Pascal, Bossuet, Malebranche, Fénelon.—So French prose, one year after the appearance of *Le Cid*, produced its first masterpiece. It was no longer an inadequate or frivolous language, leaving to the Latin all expression of general ideas; but with Descartes it conquered a new world, and *Le Discours de la Méthode* proved it capable of uniting solidity of subject with clarity of form.

**Descartes's Influence.** — Comparatively speaking, the case of Descartes was similar to that of Malherbe. He did not exercise an *individual* influence upon his century as strong as some have thought. He represents, and centralises, in a way, a whole movement which began with him. But finally, the philosophy which he definitely set forth, and which received the name *Cartesian*, was adopted by nearly everybody in the seventeenth century. It may be said that the gentlemen of Port-Royal, that Bossuet, Fénelon, were *Cartesians*. *Cartesianism* was especially upheld by Father Mersenne (1588-1648), who was a fellow-student of Descartes at the Jesuits' school of La Flèche, and who remained his most devoted friend; then by Father Malebranche, of the *Oratoire* (1638-1715), in his *Recherche de la vérité*. This influence was prolonged into the eighteenth century, and perhaps the *encyclopedists* were true continuators of Descartes' system (1).

As to the *literary* influence of Descartes, it was still less of a personal nature. It may be believed that, without him, the great writers of this century would, of themselves, have loved *reason*, *truth*, *psychology*, and *general ideas*, and would have observed in their works that *order* which is one of the essential characteristics of classical style. But it is also true that, when a general tendency finds expression in a work of genius, and is powerfully incarnated in one individual will, this tendency is regularised, and exerts itself with more force and continuity. It was so with Descartes. He compelled his century to become more distinctly conscious of its own spirit, for which he gave it imperative and clear formulas. Racine's psychology would not, perhaps, have been so well ordered, even to its least nuances, Boileau's aesthetics would not have been so distinct and absolute, nor Bossuet's eloquence so well dominated by common sense and reason, if Descartes had not served as master for these writers. Finally, if all the classical writers confined themselves to purely humanistic literature, without

(1) This thesis is sustained by H. BRUNETIÈRE, *Études critiques*, IV, 1895.

regarding the external world; if they remained impersonal and general instead of exposing the motions of their own sensibility or their realistic impressions, it was again because Descartes had cultivated the general power of *reason* at the expense of *imagination*.

## II. — THE FRENCH ACADEMY.

**Origin.** — There had always been in France reunions of men of letters and scholars, under certain regulations, as, for instance, the *pays* of the Middle Ages, the *Jeux Floraux* of Toulouse, the Académie of *Fourvières*, at Lyons, etc. — In the sixteenth century Charles IX protected the assembly founded by A. de Baif in the faubourg Saint-Marcel, at Paris, and granted it the title of *Académie de poésie et de musique* (1570). Baif had only imitated Italian academies, then numerous and flourishing (1).

From the beginning of the seventeenth century, questions of literary and grammatical discipline took on great importance : they were discussed at Mademoiselle de Gournay's, the poet Colletet's, and at the house of the first French journalist, Théophraste Renaudot. It was this kind of reunion which was held at the house of **Valentin Conrart**. "About the year 1629," says Pellisson in his *Histoire de l'Académie française*, "a few private individuals, living in various parts of Paris, finding it very inconvenient, in this big city, to visit each other often, resolved to meet together at one of their houses on one day of each week... They assembled at M. Conrart's, who was most conveniently able to receive them, and lived in the heart of the city... There they talked familiarly together as if making an ordinary visit, and upon all sorts of subjects, affairs of the day, news, belles-lettres. If one of the company had produced a work, as often happened, he willingly disclosed it to the others, who freely gave him advice... and thus they went on for three or four years."

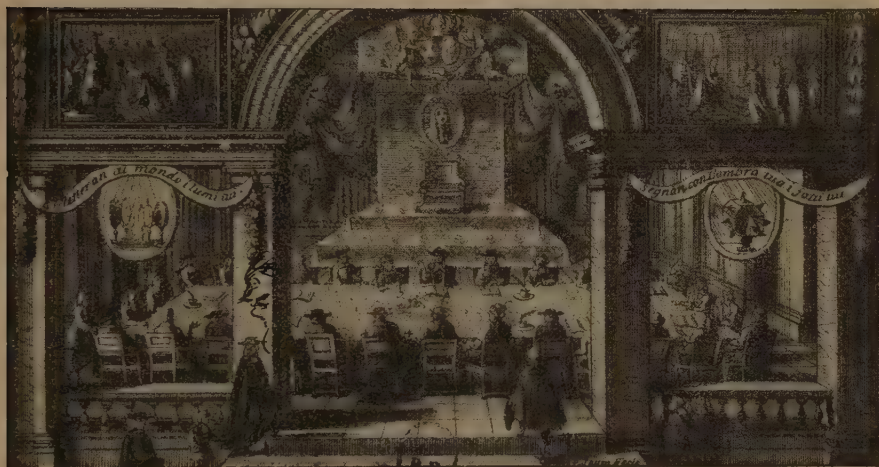
Among those who attended these first *séances* at Conrart's were : Chapelain, Godeau, Gombauld, Habert, Cérisy, Malleville, Sérizay, Faret, Desmarets, Boisrobert. It was Boisrobert, a *factotum* of Richelieu, who talked about the meetings to the cardinal. Richelieu, with his natural tendency to bring every thing under discipline, and being himself informed concerning the language and literature, felt that it would be profitable to constitute a sort of *government of letters*, and caused the question to be put to these gentlemen whether they would consent to form an official assembly. This was not accomplished without some difficulty, but finally the assembly was organised; its laws were drawn up by Conrart in 1634, and approved by the cardinal, and the king gave them letters patent in 1635. But they were obliged to wait two years before

(1) The most famous Italian Academy was at Florence. *La Crusca*, which published a dictionary of the Italian language (vide HAUVETIE, *Histoire de la littérature italienne*, Paris, Colin, 1908).

the *Parlement* would consent to register these letters, the University having protested against a new body whose rivalry it feared. At length the *French Academy* was founded.

Among the new members who were admitted to complete the number fixed by the statute, namely, forty, we should mention : Maynard, Colletet, Saint-Amant, Racan, Balzac, Vaugelas, Voiture and Séguier.

**Interior Organisation.** — The Academy, then, has always been composed of



A SITTING AT THE FRENCH ACADEMY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE XVII CENTURY  
From a contemporary print engraved by P. Sevin.

forty members, from its foundation to the present day. It recruits itself. At the death of one of its members, it discusses the claims of writers who solicit the honour of being admitted, fixes the date of the election, and chooses the new academician by secret ballot, and an absolute majority. Under the old régime, the king reserved his *approval* of each election, as *patron* of the Academy. The *receptions* became public in 1671. The simple *thanks* addressed by the new member to his confrères was transformed in 1660 into a *discourse*, and the reply of the director assumed the same length. In this discourse were always included eulogies of the new member's predecessor, as well as of Richelieu, Séguier, Louis XIV, and of the reigning king.

The meetings of the Academy were, from the beginning, presided by one of its members, elected *director*, assisted by a *chancellor*, and they were changed every quarter. The secretary was elected *for life* (*secrétaire perpétuel*).

They met, until 1642, at the houses of the different academicians. In that

year, Séguier gave them a room in his hôtel; and after his death in 1672, Louis XIV allowed them to meet in the Louvre. That there should be no precedence among the members of this entirely literary assembly, Louis XIV had forty exactly similar armchairs placed around the long table; hence the expression: *fauteuil académique*. There is a record of the occupant of each chair up to the time of the Revolution, when, the academies being grouped into the Institute of France, the tradition was broken.

Each member received after 1672 an honorarium for his presence at the meetings, which constituted a small income of eight hundred livres (francs), which was soon increased to 1200, and is nowadays somewhat larger.

Thanks to the legacies which the Academy was authorised to accept, it established prizes. The first was a prize for eloquence, founded by Balzac, the second a prize for poetry, founded by Pellisson. At this time the prizes are innumerable; and the Academy is even called upon to give prizes for moral excellence every year.

Finally, an essential point is that, ever since its birth, the Academy has not been exclusively reserved for professional literary men; it admits patrons of letters, and other great men. From this fact arises a diversity the advantages of which we shall refer to later.

**First Labours of the French Academy.** — At first, the Academicians lost time in reading discourses and memoirs on all sorts of subjects. But their statutes obliged them, before everything else, to compose a dictionary, for the purpose of "cleansing the language from impurities acquired by the speech of the people, or by the crowd at the Palace; from the jargon of the courts, and bad usage by ignorant courtiers, etc., and for establishing a sure usage of words..." The first plan for the Dictionary was rather original: simple words were placed alphabetically, each being followed by its "compounds, derivatives and diminutives." Thus *blé* is followed by the words *blastier* and *emblaver*. Examples accompanied each word, and distinguished "poetic words from those used in prose... sublime, mediocre or low." A list was given of authors from whom to select examples. This list is very eclectic, and includes Amyot, Montaigne, du Vair, *La Satyre Ménippée*, Coeffeteau, du Perron, Saint-François de Sales, Honoré d'Urfé, d'Ossat; and among the poets: Marot, Ronsard, du Bellay, du Bartas, Desportes, Berthaut, Régnier, Malherbe, Théophile, Rapin. If Chapelain's advice had been heeded, they would have made an historical dictionary, in which the names of all the authors would have been cited. But this plan was not followed, and only general examples were given of good usage controlled by good authors.—The work, very active at first, diminished after the death of Vaugelas in 1650, and the first edition only appeared in 1694 (1).

(1) A fac-simile of this first edition of 1694 was published at Lille in 1902. As soon as one edition was finished, the Academy began the preparation of another, to follow the changes in the language.





Armand Cardinal De Richelieu Duc de May de France, grand A. (her) &  
 Surintendant de la Navigation Rouenne a l'heure qu'il po le Roy au pais de Bretagne

PORTRAIT OF RICHELIEU IN 1633.

This print of Isaac Briot's represents the Cardinal at the moment of the foundation of the French Academy.

Its statutes also obliged the Academy to examine new works; and Richelieu, who wished to give authority to the company, asked it to intervene in the quarrel about *Le Cid*, which we shall speak of further on. There is no doubt that the academicians, in their *Sentiments sur le Cid*, intended to begin a series of criticisms on great contemporary works, and to become a tribunal of literary arbitrament. But, despite prodigies of cleverness, the Academy in this instance succeeded in satisfying no one. "There was one good result," says Emile Faguet, "in that the Academy has never since that time assumed the office of literary judge, and has contented itself (which gives it sufficient authority without compromising it) with its work on the Dictionary, rewarding writers of merit, succoring poor writers with the Academy's prizes and setting its approval upon authors of the first order by receiving nearly all of them into its membership (1)."

Under its statutes, the Academy also had to publish a grammar, a *poétique* and a *rhétorique*. It allowed Régnier-Desmarais to publish the grammar in 1765. As to the other works, we may see, by Fénelon's *Lettre à l'Académie*, that they were only projecting them; and these projects were abandoned.

**Influence of the French Academy.** — The influence of the French Academy should neither be depreciated nor exaggerated. From the time of its foundation, it was the butt of pamphlets, among which should be preserved the witty comedy of Saint-Evremond, *Les Académistes* (which appeared in 1656), and the *Requêtes des dictionnaires*, by Ménage. The *Dictionnaire de l'usage*, however, constantly rehandled and completed, was of great assistance to writers who, without subjecting themselves to following it altogether, could find out words in *good usage* both at court and in town. For us, these successive editions possess great *historical* value.

The Academy had another advantage, very marked in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and not without use even in our time. In reuniting, in a *salon* and upon a footing of equality, writers sometimes of the most humble origin and distinguished only by their talent or genius, with great lords, statesmen, prelates, and illustrious scientists, the Academy established among them an intellectual fraternity by which each could profit. No influence has contributed more to the elevation of the man of letters; nothing has more revealed the proper value of a great writer to those who "have done nothing but get themselves born."

It may be possible that the *Academic* style has been, and still is, insupportable; that certain writers, too preoccupied with finding a seat in a *fauteuil d'immortel*, have grown too timid and less original; that a few critics, to prepare the way

Thus appeared successively the *Dictionaries* of 1694, 1718, 1740, 1762, 1798, 1835, 1878. The *Dictionnaire de l'usage* must not be confounded with the *Dictionnaire historique*, the first volume of which appeared in 1858, and which is now in the letter D.

(1) EMILE FAGUET, *Histoire de la Littérature française*, Plon II, p. 42.

for their candidacy, have been too easy on future confrères; finally, that the Academy itself may have been guilty of systematically repulsing men whose opinions or literary temperament displeased it. It is nevertheless true that the French Academy had in its time, and still possesses, the usefulness and the prestige of a national institution.

### III. — THE HOTEL DE RAMBOUILLET.

**Its Origin.** — From the first years of the seventeenth century, society, released



A BED-SIDE IN THE XVII CENTURY

From a print by Abraham Bosse (1602-1676).

ed from the troubles of the religious wars, and enjoying comparative peace, reorganised itself before the court did : between 1615 and 1640 it conformed, in the *salons*, to fine manners and fine language; it was to be all prepared in 1660 for the court of Louis XIV.

Catherine de Vivonne, daughter of a French ambassador to Rome, was the



daughter of an Italian lady of the highest nobility. She married in 1600 the Marquis de Rambouillet. Presented at the court of Henri IV, she was shocked by its excessive liberty; and, pretending to be ill, she formed the habit of staying at home. She rebuilt, after her own designs, the hôtel Pisani which she possessed in the rue Saint-Thomas-du-Louvre (1). There she received, between 1618 and 1650, the best society and the most celebrated authors. All contemporary witnesses are unanimous concerning the Marquise de Rambouillet; beauty, wit, sentiment, education, virtue, she lacked nothing. *L'incomparable Arthénice* (2) was a superior woman without a shade of pedantry. She habitually received her guests in bed, in her "blue chamber."

**First Period (1618-1630).** — This first period of *preparation* was already brilliant. Mme de Rambouillet's principal guests were: Richelieu, still Bishop of Luçon, Cardinal de la Valette, the Marquis du Vigan, Marshal de Souvré, father of Mme de Sablé, the Princess de Montmorency, Mlle du Vigan, the Duchess de la Trémouille, Angélique Paulet (surnamed *the lioness*, because of her hair). The eldest of the four daughters of Mme de Rambouillet, Julie d'Angennes, assisted her mother in receiving.—A few men of letters, patronised by great lords, or noblemen themselves, were admitted to this brilliant society: Malherbe, Racan, Conrart, Vaugelas, Chapelain, Segrais; Voiture appeared, but did not become "the centre of the circle" until a short while later.—Several different literary influences were subjects of discussion then in the hôtel de Rambouillet: those of Malherbe, of Honoré d'Urfé, and of the Cavaliere Marino;—that is to say, serious and severe poetry entirely French; the romantic, psychological and gallant; and the most refined Italianism.

**Second Period (1630-1645).** — Other guests came to join the circle: the young Duke d'Enghien (who was to become the Grand Condé), La Rochefoucauld, the Duke de Montausier (who was to marry Julie d'Angennes), Mlle de Bourbon (sister of the grand Condé, and who was to be the second and famous Duchess de Longueville), Mlle de Coligny, Mlle de Scudéry.—Writers increased in number among the company, such as Georges de Scudéry, Mairet, Ménage, Colletet, Benséade, Gotin, Rotrou, Scarron, Desmarets, Sarrazin—Corneille himself came there, and read his *Polyeucte*; and Bossuet, sixteen years old, preached there, they say, at eleven o'clock in the evening. We should not omit Abbé Godeau, so small that he was called the *Nain de Julie* (he became Bishop of Grasse), and above all Voiture. That was the time of social entertainments, country parties, masked balls, droll inventions of Voiture's, and of the reading of Madrigals,

(1) Cf. LARROUMET, introduction to the edition of *Les Précieuses ridicules* (Garnier), p. 12.

(2) *Arthénice* is the anagram of *Catherine*. It was customary, in précieuse society, to give each other surnames in badinage (cf. *Précieuses ridicules*, sc. iv). So, Julie d'Angennes was called *Mélanide*, Mlle de Scudéry, *Sapho*, Mme de Longueville, *Laodamie* and *Mandane*, etc.; Mme de Rambouillet was also called *Cléomire* in *Le Grand Cyrus*.



sonnets, and impromptus. In 1641, the Duke de Montausier offered to Julie the famous *Guirlande*, composed of seventy-six madrigals written in fine penmanship, surmounted by as many miniatures on vellum representing flowers, emblems of the physical and moral perfections of Julie. All the wits of the hôtel de Rambouillet, Corneille included, had worked on the volume.

**Decline of the Hôtel de Rambouillet (1645-1660).** — The salon of Arthénice continued to receive new and shining recruits, such as Mme de Sévigné and Mme de La Fayette. But Julie's marriage to M. de Montausier, the Fronde troubles, the death of Voiture (1648), that of the Marquis de Rambouillet (1653), of her eldest son (1654), and finally the marriage of her youngest daughter, Angélique, to M. de Grignan, all contributed to disenchant Mme de Rambouillet, and incline her to retirement. She died in 1665.



POTRAIT OF JULIE D'ANGENNES

From a modern inspired print of the frontispiece of the *Guirlande de Julie*.

“**Préciosité**”. — “... A resolve, a wager that one would be *distinguished*, as they would have said sixty years later, to be *superior*, as we should say today, was then called *précieux* (1).” It was thus that Sainte-Beuve happily defined true *préciosité*, which was a reaction both from *liberty of manners* and *licence of language*.

The reaction against liberty of manners explains the place held by *galanterie* at the Hôtel de Rambouillet. In a reunion of noblemen and ladies, how could they refrain from speaking about love? At least, they would not speak of it as they did at the court of François I or Henri IV, in too *cavalier* a manner; and surely they would not use it as a theme for *gaulois* or *Italian* tales, after the fashion of Boccaccio, of Bonaventure des Périers or of Marguerite de Navarre. Mme de Rambouillet seems to have had the honour to be the first to

(1) SAINTE-BEUVE, *Portraits de femmes*, p. 325.

impose upon her guests a perfectly proper expression of love. To accomplish this, she had recourse, unconsciously, to the refinements of the *courtois* Middle Ages. After several centuries of *gauloiserie*, she acted over again the part of Marie de Champagne, patroness of Chrétien de Troyes.

"It is necessary," says Mlle de Scudéry, "that all men should be lovers, and that all ladies should be loved." These chivalric and platonic loves were subjects of moral discussion; "*on met une question galante sur le tapis*," and each one gave his opinion. But though the Marquise saw only a pleasant game in this fashion of feigning love, it appears that her daughter Julie carried the *casuistry* to excess, and introduced into the conversation some of the romantic, subtle and mannered faults of *préciosité*. Julie conducted herself towards M. de Montausier—who had the patience to wait fourteen years for her to marry him—like Armande towards Clitandre in the *Femmes savantes*.—The third degree of this false gallantry appears in the novels of Mlle de Scudéry, and justifies the raillery of Molière.

With respect to *language*, the *Précieuses* of the Hôtel de Rambouillet legitimately wished to endow it with, first of all, decency, subtlety, and at the same time propriety. To say everything, without brutality and without obscurity, even those things the most difficult to speak about, was the *précieux* ideal. From that point, one passes very quickly to the witty periphrase, the piquant metaphor—after which there is but one step more to affectation. But it was not at the Hôtel de Rambouillet that this last species of *préciosité* was practised, but in the rival salons of Mlle de Scudéry, Mme de Bouchavannes, the Countess de Brégis, and especially in the provinces, at Poitiers, Bordeaux, Lyons, and Montpellier. We learn all the excesses of *préciosité* from *La-Précieuse ou le Mystère des ruelles*, by Abbé de Pure (1636), and particularly from the *Grand Dictionnaire des précieuses* by Somaize (1660).

It is Somaize who has preserved for us, along with the names and surnames of the principal *précieuses*, the metaphors which the most extreme among them used in conversation. The moon was called: *le flambeau du silence*; the bed, *l'empire de Morphée*; the teeth, *l'ameublement de la bouche*; the feet, *les chers souffrants*; the hand, *la belle mouvante*; a candle, *le supplément du soleil*; a mirror, *le conseiller des grâces*; a glass of water, *un bain intérieur*; the fireplace, *l'empire de Vulcain*; the bellows, *la petite maison d'Éole*. The *précieuses* also used abstract phraseology: *avoir du fiel contre quelqu'un* (to be angry); *donner dans le doux* (flattery), etc. Finally, they "punctuated" their affirmations with adverbs like *furieusement*, *terriblement*, etc. Some of these metaphors have passed into current speech, such as *laisser tomber la conversation*, *mettre une question sur le tapis*, *travestir sa pensée*.

In reality, and if we pass over the trivial exaggerations of the false or ridiculous *précieuses*, *préciosité* is the spirit of politeness and elegance applied to conversation. It rises, as a necessary barrier, against invasion by coarseness.

And when we think that one of the most substantial merits of our classical authors is precisely the gift of restraint and of distinguished propriety in the expression of sentiments, we cannot deny the fortunate influence exerted by the salons upon literature. The excesses soon came to an end; and Molière gave them their death-thrust in 1659. The advantages survived; and Molière himself, who developed his work in the provinces and excelled in farces, owed to this purification and *education* of style the correctness and harmonious beauty of the *Misanthrope* and the *Femmes savantes*.

We must now examine separately two of the writers who shone at the Hôtel de Rambouillet, Balzac and Voiture.

#### IV. — BALZAC (1594-1654).

**Biography.** — Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac, born at Angoulême in 1594, wrote his first Letters from Rome in 1624. He had accompanied there Cardinal de La Valette, son of the Duke d'Épernon, to whom he had first been attached. These letters were greatly admired, and circulated in the best Parisian society; so that when Balzac returned to Paris, he found himself already famous. But, instead of establishing himself in the metropolis, he retired to his property on the borders of the Charenton, and from there, from *Balzac*, he corresponded with his contemporaries. In 1635, he became one of the first members of the French Academy. He rarely appeared at the Hôtel de Rambouillet; but his letters were awaited, read and admired there.

**Letters of Balzac.** — These letters are numerous, and fill one of the two folio volumes of his *Œuvres complètes* (1665). They are addressed to all the great personages of his time; but the greater number went to Chapelain and Conrart, whom Balzac knew to be capable of appreciating, and making others appreciate his style. The letters cover all sorts of subjects, but especially criticisms of new works, concerning which Balzac liked to express his judgment (Letter to Corneille about *Cinna*, January 17, 1643). They speak of the country, which he loved, and where he found the leisure and solitude necessary for perfecting his style (letter to Chapelain, May 12, 1638), and of religious and philosophical themes which he handles as so many *general subjects* upon which to exercise his eloquence.

**His Eloquence. His Ideas.** — *Eloquence*, that is the *art of speaking finely*, is indeed the word used by all Balzac's contemporaries to characterize his style, for his Letters were in no sense improvisations or effusions. All is carefully calculated; all is serious and noble. The *phrase* is admirably constructed and balanced; the word is always full and vigorous, and put in its right place. Bal-

zac therefore rendered to prose the same service Malherbe rendered to poetry : he gave it force and regularity.—But there were defects : Balzac did not know how to be simple, and he made everything he touched heavy.

On the other hand, it is unjust to deny that he had *ideas*, or to accuse him of mere *phrase-making*. His Letters strike us, on the contrary, by the profundity and beauty of his ideas. There were no subjects, which he could not elevate and sustain by philosophy, morals and religion. As a critic he has written some excellent pages; and his dissertations to Mme de Rambouillet on the Romans, like his Letter to Corneille, proved that he had the true historical sense.

He wanted to prove, besides, that he was capable of writing longer works. He published *Le Prince*, an indirect eulogy of Louis XIII; *Aristippe ou la Cour*, a dissertation on politics; and the *Socrate chrétien*. Though the style of these three works, when read in their entirety, is too long drawn out and fatiguing, parts of them have a striking solidity, and resemble fragments translated from Cicero or Seneca.

Greatly admired by his contemporaries, who surnamed him *Le Grand Epistolier*, Balzac was sharply attacked by Father Goulu, Superior General of the *Feuillants*, who accused him of plagiarism and immorality. Balzac haughtily defended himself, and public opinion was on his side (1).

## V. — VOITURE (1598-1648).

**Biography and Character.** — Son of an Amiens wine-merchant, Vincent Voiture first filled the office of controller general in the household of Gaston d'Orléans. He followed his employer to Brussels, and into Lorraine, and was charged with missions to Spain and Italy. He became major-domo to the king in 1639, and again made many journeys in 1640 and 1642. Introduced at the Hôtel de Rambouillet by one of his former fellow-students at college, the Count d'Avaux, and by M. de Chaudbonne, his wit compensated for his lack of birth and fortune, and he became a personage there.

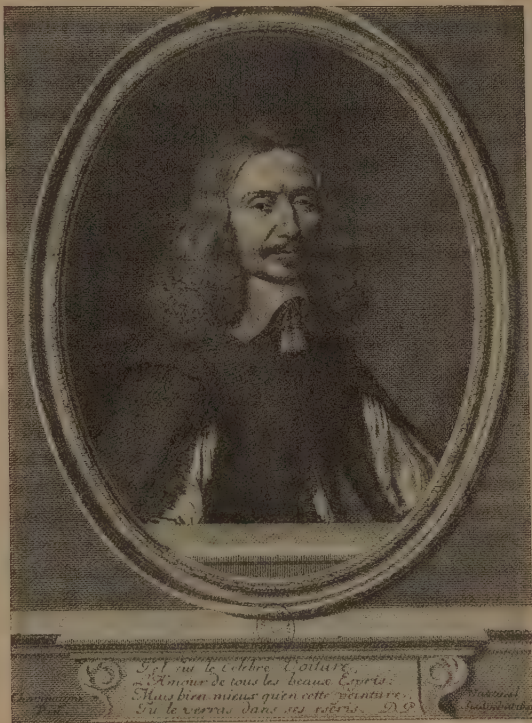
We will first consider Voiture as the man who, for more than twenty years, enlivened and amused the Hôtel de Rambouillet. For this employment, he possessed two qualities : *imagination* and *talent*. His imagination suggested to him his *ideas* for amusing this society, where no doubt people conversed, but where also they did not disdain the most frivolous social distractions. Voiture invented *disguises*. One day he contrived to have a party of Swedes bring a letter to Julie from Gustavus Adolphus—a hero for whom she had unlimited admiration. One day he led some bears even into the *Chambre bleue*. He or-

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 114; 2nd cycle, p. 321.



ganised country parties (see his letter to Cardinal de La Valette, 1630), masked balls (see his letter from the *carp* to the *pike*, 1643), etc. Men of this sort are much appreciated in society, where they are treated very kindly but very exigently. Voiture was inexhaustible and good-natured.—But, on the other hand, he had talent. He was not merely “the gentleman who knows how to lead the cotillon,” or play every kind of game; he was a poet, and an *épistolier*, he was good at repartee, and he possessed tact. By these means he made himself respected, and a little feared.

He even descended to impertinence, for he feared nothing so much as to incur the contempt which is the inevitable reward of too much willingness to oblige. “He would be insupportable if he belonged to our world,” Condé said of him. But it is nevertheless true that *Valère*, as they called him, reigned at the Hôtel de Rambouillet, where he was “the centre of the circle, (1)” and that his death in 1648 was the signal for dispersion.



PORTRAIT OF VOITURE

After the picture of Ph. de Champaigne (1606-1674),  
engraved by Robert Nanteuil (1623-1678)

**Voiture's Letters.**—Voiture did not rank with Balzac as a *letter-writer*; but, like him, he wrote letters destined to be read in a distinguished social circle, and whose style consequently is very polished. His letters were addressed to great *personages* whose protégé he was, or to friends at the Hôtel de Rambouillet. They number two hundred, and were collected after his death by his nephew Pinchène.

(1) They then said *le rond* as later they said *le cercle*.

They are various in tone. The celebrated letter on Richelieu may be first mentioned; it was written in 1636, after the taking of Corbie, and is couched in the most substantial and *historical* style. Voiture was capable of talking seriously about the Romans and about Alexander to Mme Rambouillet (Letter XXXVI). The letters to great noblemen, like Condé, the Marquis de Pisani, the Count d'Avaux, and Cardinal de La Valette, consist of a piquant mixture of hyperbolical eulogy and social badinage. Voiture excelled in *narrative*: he tells us wittily how he was taken in (Letter IX); or how he journeyed on the Rhône (Letters CXXVII and CXXVIII); he gives Cardinal de La Valette a charming description of a country fête (Letter X). Sometimes he carried badinage too far, as in the too famous letter from the *carp* to the *pike*. But altogether this correspondence is that of a very witty man, who knew his language exceedingly well, who had infinite resources of wit and style, and who may only be reproached with having tried too hard to please (1).

**His Poetry.** — Voiture wrote *épîtres en vers, sonnets, stanzas, madrigals, epigrams and rondeaux*. Like Marot before him, he wrote poetry on current social events, and in this he was past master. His essential quality is a certain facility in making his point, which still charms the reader; a talent for finding a *terse, final sentence* which fully satisfies; and a truly astonishing rightness in the use of metaphors and figures. To this he added a sometimes pathetic grace of sentimental badinage which Marot never knew.—But we must note also an abuse of wit, of mythology, some Italianisms, and in it all an air of *futility* which spoils the most finished pieces. A rivalry was also set up between Voiture's sonnet on *Uranie* and Benserade's on *Job*, so that the Hôtel de Rambouillet was divided into *Uranistes* and *Jobelins*, Mme de Longueville conducting the first party, and the Prince de Condé the second (2).

## VI. — VAUGELAS (1585-1650).

This review of those who took part in the perfecting of French prose would be incomplete without the mention of *Vaugelas* who, a member of the Academy from its foundation, worked zealously upon the Dictionary. He published in 1647 his *Remarques sur la langue française*, which is useful as a complement to the Dictionary, and in which he bases his authority for accepting or rejecting an expression upon *good usage* at court and in society, corroborated by great writers.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 118; 2nd cycle, p. 329.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 340.

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PORTRAIT OF RICHELIEU

The names of the forty-first academicians radiate round the image of "Son Éminence ducale".



DECORATIVE FRIEZE BY JEAN LEPAUTRE (1618-1682).

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE FORMATION OF CLASSICAL TRAGEDY CORNEILLE AND HIS TIME.

#### SUMMARY

1° **BEFORE CORNEILLE**, the dramatic genres were: the **pastoral**, the **tragi-comedy**, the **tragedy**; and all these genres still enjoyed wide liberty of form.—It was **HARDY** who from 1600 to 1630, **furnished** plays for the theatre of the Hôtel de Bourgogne. He composed a great number of pieces, forty of which he published.—**THÉOPHILE DE VIAU** published in 1617 his **Pyrame et Thisbé**.—**MAIRET** composed in 1634 his **Sophonisbe**, the first regular tragedy produced.

2° **CORNEILLE** (1606-1684) made his debut with a comedy (**Mélite**, 1629), achieved a triumph with **Le Cid** in 1636, and composed tragedies and comedies until 1652. He retired from the theatre for seven years, returning in 1659 with **Edipe**, and continuing to write until 1674. He died in poverty in 1684.—History of his dramatic work.—Corneille lent himself with difficulty to the Aristotelian **rules**; he chose his subjects from history, especially that of the Romans; he liked to complicate the action in order to increase the merit of his heroes, in whom he incarnated **will**; he portrayed love as a generous passion founded upon **esteem**; his dramatic work is "a school for greatness of soul"; his style is oratorical and serious; he is the greatest French writer in verse.

3° **CORNEILLE'S CONTEMPORARIES**: **ROTROU**, author of **Saint-Genest** (1646) and of **Venceslas** (1647); **DU RYER**; **TRISTAN L'HERMITE**; **THOMAS CORNEILLE**, brother of Pierre, author of **Timocrate** (1656), **Ariane** (1672), and **Le Comte d'Essex** (1678), a very clever and much applauded dramatist.



## I. — BEFORE CORNEILLE (1600-1630).



DECORATED LETTER

by Abraham Bosse (1602-1675).

**he Genres.** — At the beginning of the seventeenth century several genres seemed to share the favour of the public. Without speaking here of comedy or farce, serious drama was represented by tragedy, tragi-comedy and the pastoral.—Tragedy, according to A. de Montchrestien, was not yet regularly established under the form used by Corneille, Rotrou, Racine, etc.; nor was not until Mairet's *Sophonisbe* in 1634 (1). It was necessary to wait until the public was capable of appreciating a more austere beauty, that it should become more interested in morals and psychology, and should lose its infatuation for the extraordinary or the insipid. The other two genres

satisfied much more the public taste: the tragi-comedy with its sword-and-cape adventures, its extravagances, the freedom of its presentation, its happy denouement, was a sort of aristocratic melodrama; and the pastoral, which came from Italy (Tasso's *Aminta* appeared in 1574) united romantic action with romantic sentiments. We shall revert to each of these genres played at the Hôtel de Bourgogne and the Marais, and their principal authors.

It was in the first years of the seventeenth century that regular troupes of professional actors succeeded to the *confréries* and temporary associations in Paris. Already, in 1599, the director of a travelling troupe of actors, Valleran-Lecomte, had rented their hall in the Hôtel de Bourgogne to the *Confrères de la Passion*; and this troupe made several more journeys into the provinces, so that it was not until 1628 that the Hôtel de Bourgogne became a permanent theatre like those of to-day. A few of the actors of this troupe founded the theatre of the Marais, in the rue de la Poterie, which became celebrated for its presentation of the masterpieces of Corneille. To Valleran-Lecomte's troupe was attached a young poet named Alexandre Hardy.

**HARDY** (1569-1630) is only known as official play-wright to the Hôtel de Bourgogne. He must have earned his living painfully, if we may judge by the feverish activity with which he produced a great number of pieces in about thirty years: it is believed that he must have composed at least seven or eight hundred, though only forty were printed (6 volumes, 1623-1628) of pastorals, tragi-co-

(1) *Sophonisbe* is usually dated 1629. M. E. Rigal adopts the date 1634 (Cf. *Histoire de la Littérature française*, JULLEVILLE, Colin, vol. IV, p. 231, note, and p. 252.). Concerning the origin of tragedy, and the first theorists on the subject, p. 255.

medies and tragedies (*Didon se sacrifiant*, *La Mort d'Achille*, *Coriolan*, *La Mort d'Alexandre*, etc.).

Hardy's tragedies were presented like the ancient *Mysteries*, the scenery representing several places at once. The action moved with the characters, from one country to another, and was not limited by the twenty-four hours



REPRESENTATION OF "LA MIRAME" BY CARDINAL DE RICHELIEU, GIVEN AT THE  
PALAIS-CARDINAL THEATRE

From a print by Étienne de la Belle.

rule. But Hardy already was conscious of the classical crisis. "Wishing to write a *Coriolan*, he did not begin with the siege of *Corioles*, as Shakespeare did, but with the disgrace of the Roman hero; and thenceforward there remained but one question: Would Rome or Coriolanus be the victim of this act of ingratitude? Writing *Didon*, he did not begin with the disembarking of the Trojans in Africa, like the Englishman Marlowe or the Italian Giraldi, but by Eneas' desire to leave Carthage and follow his destiny; and thenceforth there is but one question: Can Dido hold, or

can she not hold Encas? Will she be happy, or will she kill herself (1)?"

Furthermore, Hardy already knew, as a genuine playwright, how to bring out the interest and the unity of sentiments of his characters, and how to hold the spectator's attention by the continuity of his scenes. In short, his was a genre of tragedy of wider scope than the classical, and he only lacked the genius to make its form final.

Hardy composed mostly tragi-comedies, a genre then essentially free in choice of subject, breadth of action, number of characters, and the number of juxtaposed scenes. A few of these pieces required several "*journées*" to play: *L'Histoire éthiopique* required eight, five acts being given each time (2). The tragi-comedy is more a fusion of several genres than a genre in itself. Heroic comedy was to develop from it, in the style of Corneille's *Don Sanche*, and Molière's *Don Garcie de Navarre*.—Hardy also definitely developed the type of a third genre, the pastoral, in which the characters are Arcadian shepherds and shepherdesses. Here the influence of *Astrée*, the famous novel by Honoré d'Urfé (1610-49), was evident, as well as that of Italy. It was under this double influence that Racan wrote his *Bergeries* in dramatic form (3). D'Urfé himself composed, in 1625, a *Sylvanire*, which must not be confounded with Mairet's; and Gombauld published, in 1628, an *Amaranthe*.



PORTRAIT OF MAIRET

After a lithography copied on a contemporary print.

(1) É. RIGAL, *Histoire de la Littérature française*, Julléville-Colin, IV, p. 206.

(2) Cf. RIGAL, *loc cit.*, p. 212. Read the analysis of *Gésippe et Elmire* and of *Frégonde*.

(3) Cf. p. 301.

**THÉOPHILE DE VIAU** (1590-1626), who left a tragedy, *Pyrame et Thisbé* (1617), and *Bergeries*, a pastoral played in 1619, was also famous as a lyric poet (1). Two ridiculous verses are quoted from it about the poniard which blushed for its own cowardice in being stained with the blood of its master; but the piece is worth more than its reputation. According to M. Rigal, Théophile's merit lies in having reintroduced poetry into tragedy, which Hardy, as a theatrical writer, had too strictly banished. We find in Théophile's work lyricism, and a lyricism *précieux*, along with an often daintily expressed tenderness.

**MAIRET** (1604-1686). — **The Classic Unities.** — The two most celebrated pieces of this enemy of Corneille's are : a pastoral, *Silvanire* (1631), the preface of which is important as it deals with the question of the unities; and a tragedy, *Sophonisbe* (1634). In *Sophonisbe* Mairet puts into practice the principles formulated in his preface to *Silvanire*.

A certain F. Ogier had written in 1628, a preface for *Tyr et Sidon*, Jean de Schelandre's tragedy in two "*journées*." In this he sustains very interesting arguments in favour of liberty as to time. Mairet replies to Ogier, demanding unity of action and unity of time : the whole action should pass in twenty-four hours; and his chief reason is probability, as Scaliger had said in the sixteenth century. Unity of time, especially if it is founded on probability, must lead to unity of place, and thus greatly alter the system of presentation at the Hôtel de Bourgogne.—These three unities are strictly observed for the first time in Mairet's *Sophonisbe*. If we add to this characteristic the historical subject of the piece, its nobility of tone, the psychological analyses which explain the actions of the characters, we shall see that Mairet was, in 1634, the true precursor of Corneille; and for this reason his name will not die (2). It is unfortunate, without doubt, that Mairet should have taken part in the quarrel about *Le Cid*, and rather unpleasantly; but we must imagine his vexation at the brilliant success of a rival. Indeed, in 1636, he abandoned tragedy for tragic-comedy.

We now proceed to Corneille, reverting again later on to his contemporaries.

## II. — CORNEILLE (1606-1684).

**Biography. First Years.** — Fontenelle, a nephew of Corneille, said truly : "The life of M. Corneille, as a private individual, was not sufficiently important to be written; and, as an illustrious author, his life was properly speaking the history of his works." So his biography can be briefly written; it suffices us to note the different stages of his life.

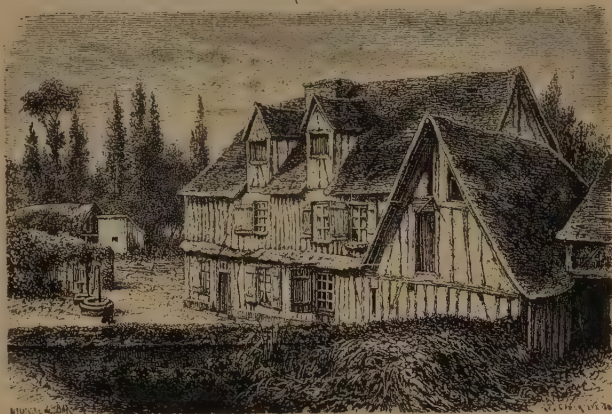
(1) Cf. p. 305.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 342.



Pierre Corneille was born at Rouen on June 6, 1606, of a *bourgeoise* family of minor officials, his father being Master of Waters and Forests. He studied at the Jesuits' college in his native town, and was a very good student, that is to say, an excellent Latinist. His genius, with its natural bent for power, grandeur and declamation, found appropriate food in the Latin orators and poets. He particularly liked Seneca in his tragedies, and Lucanus, both Spanish Romans, and poet-moralists whose work abounded in sublime or ingenious sentences, and magnificent tirades.

After leaving college, Corneille studied law, and bought in 1628 an office of advocate-general to the *Table de marbre du Palais*, which he held until 1650. He owed above all to his legal studies the art of arguing, and the dialectics, at once substantial and over-subtle, which enliven the speeches of his characters. How many scenes in *Le Cid*, in *Polyeucte*, and even in the least of his tragedies, are real pleas, in which the listener applauds equally the attack and the defence.



CORNEILLE'S HOUSE AT PETIT-CROIX PRÈS ROUEN

It is said that Pierre Corneille retired here to write his tragedies.

**His débuts at the Theatre.** — Nothing in Corneille's peaceful and modest provincial life seemed to destine him for the theatre,—a proof that genius creates for itself favourable circumstances and opportunities, for its manifestation. A social adventure at Rouen inspired him with a sonnet to Mlle Milet, and he conceived the idea of setting this sonnet in a comedy, *Mélite*, which was acted at Paris in 1629. The success of *Mélite* encouraged Corneille to produce successively several more comedies, and in 1635 his first tragedy, *Médée*. Corneille was then in Paris, whither the success of his first pieces had drawn and partly established him. It was probably to meet the expenses of his sojourn there, and also to assure himself of a powerful patron, that he worked in the company of the "five authors" of Cardinal de Richelieu. Richelieu, who thought he himself had dramatic talent, would draw

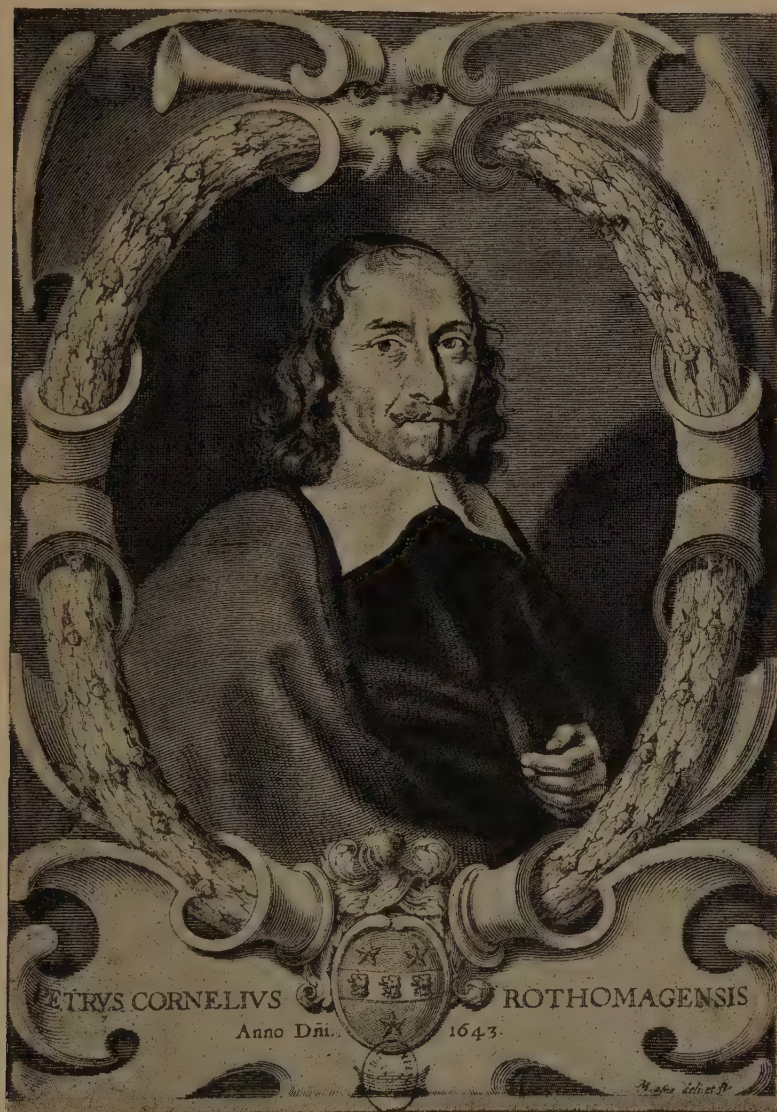
up the plan of a pastoral or comedy, and distribute the acts to be put into verse by Corneille, Boisrobert, Colletet, L'Estoile and Rotrou. It is known that, for having modified the third act of the comedy of the *Tuilleries*, Corneille was accused of incoherence, and probably dismissed. We may remark here Corneille's maladroitness in pleasing great personages. Very proud but very timid, yet feeling that he had need of their support, he wrote dedications and epistles of which the humble and sometimes supplicating tone astonishes and pains us. (See especially the dedication of *Horace* to Richelieu, of *Cinna* to M. de Montoron, of *Pompée* to Mazarin).

**The Period of his Masterpieces.** — This period began in 1636 with *Le Cid*. The quarrel which followed spoiled the years 1637 and 1639 for Corneille. But he published, one after another, *Horace* and *Cinna* in 1640; *Polyeucte* and *Pompée* in 1643. In 1647 he was received into the French Academy.

**Retirement (1652-1659).** — In 1652, the failure of *Pertharite* discouraged him; and he left Paris and retired to Rouen, where he did nothing but finish his translation in verse of the "Imitation of Jesus Christ", and prepare an edition of his Complete Works. He then lived at Rouen in the same house with his brother Thomas, and there he remained for seven years. He had married Mlle de Lamperrière in 1640, and had seven children. Of three surviving sons, two were officers, one of whom died at the siege of Grave in 1674, and he was the grandfather of Marie-Anne Corneille whom Voltaire adopted and dowered with the proceeds of his *Commentaire* (1764). The third son, Thomas, became Abbot of Aiguevive in 1680. One of his daughters took the veil; another married and was the grand-aunt of Charlotte Corday. Corneille lived like a simple citizen, working on his sacred poetry, on critical discourses concerning his art, and critical studies of his own pieces.

**Return to the Theatre (1659-1674).** — In 1658, certain circumstances which have not been clearly explained caused Corneille to return to the theatre. Molière's troupe came to Rouen and played several of Corneille's dramas, which, as we know, were included in their repertory. In addition, Fouquet offered Corneille a large sum if he would compose a new tragedy, and proposed three subjects for him to choose from. Corneille yielded to the temptation, and produced in 1659 his *OEdipe*, with great success. This play was followed by ten others, with varying success. But, in 1674, *Suréna* fell flat, and Corneille, then aged sixty-eight, definitely renounced the theatre.

There are various disputable stories on the subject of the poverty of his last years. Having always lacked tact and restraint in his demands as well as in his gratitude, and having expressed them in verse, where hyperbole would more naturally find a place than in simple letters, Corneille himself contributed to



PORTRAIT OF CORNEILLE IN 1643.

From a print by Michel Lasne.



accredit these anecdotes. It is sure that he earned comparatively little from his dramas, and impoverished himself in dowering his daughters and sons, especially the two officers who "kept up a position suited to noblemen." In 1677 he addressed an epistle in verse to the king, and in 1678 a letter to Colbert, to solicit an abbey for his son Thomas. He obtained it; but the pension of two thousand *livres* which had been settled upon him in 1662 ceased to be paid in 1674; and though in 1678 it was again paid to him, the payments were irregular. Boursault tells us that Boileau, a few months before Corneille's death, offered to give up his own pension to him. Louis XIV sent Corneille two hundred louis from the privy-purse a short time before the poet's death. It is therefore certain that Corneille could not meet his heavy expenses; and perhaps may be accused of an unskilful use of his fortune (1).

**Corneille's Character.** — His character is already evident in his biography; but several details may be added. Corneille was not at all a man of the world; he said of himself: "As God made me a bad courtier, so I have found at court more praise than benefit, and more esteem than profit (2)". La Bruyère drew an excellent portrait of Corneille in 1690, six years after his death, in this celebrated passage:

"Another (3) is simple, timid, a tiresome talker; he takes one word for another, and only judges of the merit of his piece by the amount of money it gains; he cannot recite it or even read it. But leave him to rise by his own composition, and he is not less than *Auguste, Pompée, Nicomède, Héraclius*; he is a king, and a great king; he is a politician, a philosopher; he undertakes to make heroes speak and act; he depicts the Romans, and they are grander and more Roman in his verse than in their own history." Evidently, his contemporaries were struck by the contrast, in him whom they called *le bonhomme Corneille*, between the man and his genius. For Corneille, a peaceful and timid citizen, churchwarden of his parish, father of a family, ruining himself for his children, is the exact opposite of the romanticist poet: "He does not feel himself to be intended for any social or political function. He is great only in intellect which in him was sublime," says La Bruyère (4).

There was absolute opposition between Corneille's religion and that of

(1) This story of the shoe is also told. In 1852, a man of learning published at Rouen a letter from an inhabitant of that city, written in 1674, to Paris, in which the principal passage was: "I have seen M. Corneille, our relative and friend... We went out together after dinner and in the rue de la Parcheminerie, he entered a shop to have his shoe mended, which was ripped. He sat down on a bench and I near him; and when the workman had finished, he gave him three pieces which he had in his pocket. I wept to see so great a genius reduced to such a depth of poverty." Théophile Gautier wrote a celebrated poem on this theme, in which romanticism, à la Vigny, has free play. The anecdote is not accepted as authentic nowadays. See F. Bouquet, *Points obscurs de la vie de Corneille* (2nd part, chap. v), Paris, 1888.

(2) *Avertissement au lecteur*, ed. of 1644.

(3) He had just spoken of La Fontaine (chap. ix, *Des Jugements*).

(4) *Caractères*, chap. I (*Des Ouvrages de l'esprit*).



Racine. Corneille never saw any incompatibility between the theatre and Christian devotion, whereas Racine, from the day when he was converted, gave up writing tragedies.

Corneille died in Paris, september 30, 1684, and was buried in the Church of Saint-Roch.

**History of his Plays.** — Corneille began by writing comedies. His first piece was **Mélite** (1629). The plot, of the first part at least, is rather ingenious, and has often been used again in the theatre. A young man, *Eraste*, betrothed to *Mélite*, presents to her his friend *Tircis*; and *Tircis* is soon loved by *Mélite*. To revenge himself *Eraste* writes false letters calumniating *Mélite*. *Tircis* believes himself betrayed, and declares he will kill himself; *Mélite*, who receives a report of his death, swoons; *Eraste* is told that *Mélite* is dead, and he goes mad. Finally, everything is cleared up, and *Mélite* marries *Tircis*. — In his critical study (1), Corneille tells us what quality it was that most forcibly appealed to his contemporaries: "The novelty of this kind of comedy, of which there was no example in any other language, and naïve style which reproduced the conversation of *honnêtes gens*, was doubtless the cause of this surprising good fortune." At this period, in fact, comedy was somewhat coarse and full of buffoonery: it was always farce. For dignity of composition it was necessary to have recourse to tragi-comedy and the pastoral. Corneille, therefore, had the indisputable glory of having produced successfully the first models of decent, well-bred comedy.

He continued in this vein in **La Veuve** ou **Le traître puni** (1633), **La Galerie du Palais** ou **l'Amie rivale** (1633), **La Suivante** (1634), **La Place Royale** (1634), **L'Illusion comique** (1636). All these pieces turn upon misunderstandings of characters which later prove to be virtuous; we feel in them the influence of *Astrée*, the Italian pastoral and *préciosité*. But Corneille's taste for realism, too, led him to place his scenes in Parisian surroundings, in the *Place Royale* (now the *Place des Vosges*), which was then "the centre of fashionable society", and even more frequently in **La Galerie du Palais** (the Palace of Justice), with its linen and haberdasher shops, and its bookshop, and in which the conversation of merchants and buyers supply some interesting details concerning the fashions, costumes, or bookseller's successes of the time.

Meanwhile, in 1631, just after the success of *Mélite*, Corneille had had a tragi-comedy performed, then a fashionable genre. This was **Clitandre**, of which even the author himself, in his minute analysis of the piece, does not succeed in explaining clearly the over-complicated plot. In 1635, between *La Place Royale* and *L'Illusion Comique*, Corneille had produced his first tragedy, **Médée**, imitated from Seneca. He did not succeed in expressing, as Euripides did, the struggle between maternal tenderness and vengeance; it is vengeance only which he personifies in his heroine. *Médée's* proud reply: "*Dans un si grand revers que vous reste-t-il? — Moi*", has been preserved.

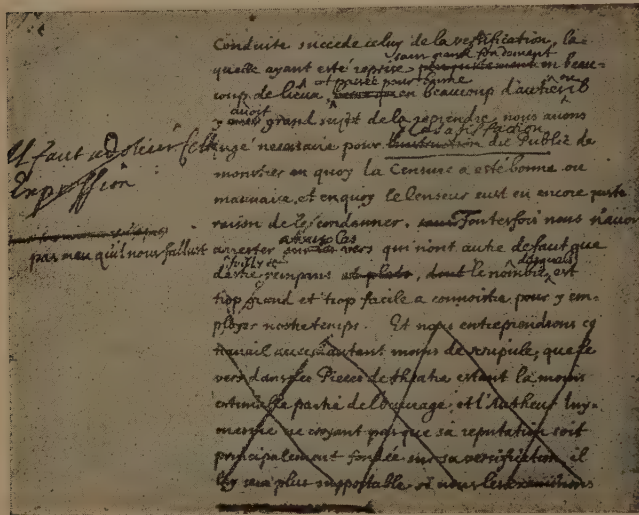
At the end of the year 1636, the Theatre of the Marais gave a performance of **Le Cid**, imitated from the Spanish *romancero*, and particularly from the drama of Gullhem de Castro (1621). It is claimed that Corneille had been led to study Spanish literature by M. de Chalons, formerly secretary to Marie de Médicis, then in retirement at Rouen.

Corneille's first masterpiece, then, was imitated from the Spanish. He borrowed the main subject and the chief characters from the *Enfances du Cid*; but, whereas in the Spanish drama the action covers several years, Corneille simplified it and reduced it to the *psychological crisis*. — Rodrigue, son of Don Diègue, loves Chimène, daughter of

(1) In his 1660 edition, prepared at Rouen, and published in three volumes at Paris, Corneille wrote a critical study of each piece, from *Mélite* (1629) to *Edipe* (1659). But he did not do this for his later dramas, from *La Toison d'or* (1660) to *Suréna* (1674).

Don Gormas; the arrangements are almost completed between the two families and Rodrigue is about to marry Chimène. Suddenly a quarrel breaks out between the two fathers: Don Gormas strikes the aged Don Diègue, who, lacking the necessary strength himself, calls upon his son to avenge him. Rodrigue hesitates: "Should the affront go unpunished? Should Chimène's father be punished?" Finally he sees his duty clearly: he provokes Don Gormas and kills him. He then goes to Chimène and tells her that although he will love her forever, he has no regret for his deed, because it was his duty. Chimène approves of his courage, and declares that she also will do her duty,

which is to prosecute the murderer of her father and demand his punishment. Meanwhile, Don Diègue hears that the Moors are preparing to surprise Seville; he sends Rodrigue to attack them, and the young man achieves a complete victory. But Chimène continues to ask for Rodrigue's death, and the king consents to have a simple combat arranged between Rodrigue and Don Sanche, Chimène's champion. Don Sanche is vanquished. The king declares that honour is satisfied,



#### THE OPINION OF THE ACADEMY ON *Le Cid*

Facsimile of a page of Chapelain's manuscript autograph, noted down in the margin by Cardinal Richelieu himself.

and his last words imply the possibility of a marriage between Chimène and Rodrigue.

The success of the *Cid* was brilliant, and revealed in Corneille a tragic poet whose existence had not been suspected in the author of *Médée*. It became a proverb to say: "Fine as *Le Cid*." But this success brought about the famous quarrel in which, among Corneille's adversaries, were a Scudéry, a Chapelain and a Richelieu (1). The Cardinal, in leaving the question of the *Cid* to the French Academy, was not so much influenced by personal jealousy or rancour as by his desire to make a tribunal of literary arbitration of this Academy which he was rallied for having founded. That was why he gave his personal attention to the publication of the *Sentiments de l'Académie française sur le Cid*. Corneille was greatly unnerved by this quarrel. He easily rid himself, in haughty terms, of Scudéry and Claveret; but the Cardinal and the Academy were more serious enemies. Without exaggerating the effects of the *Sentiments de l'Académie* upon Corneille, it is possible that he was influenced by it, though perhaps unconsciously, respecting two

(1) The best critical account of this quarrel is M. F. HÉMON's, in the notice to his edition of *Le Cid* (Paris, Delagrave). — Cf. A. GASTÉ, *La Querelle du Cid* (Rouen, 1894).

points: he decided never again to imitate any piece, as they had accused him of ~~plagiaris-~~ing the Spanish dramatist, and to search thenceforth for remarkable historical incidents from which to write an original tragedy, perferably from antiquity, which was more in favour with men of letters and savants.—As to the first point, Corneille was to be congratulated, as he gave proof of admirable variety in the art of creating action and characters; as to the second point, the influence of the quarrel was regrettable, as Corneille could have drawn all sorts of subjects from the *romancero*, or from French romances.

However that may have been, Corneille produced no new tragedy in the years 1637, 1638 and 1639. But he was not satisfied by merely replying to his adversaries, or cursing his critics; he had been working, and in 1640 he produced two tragedies, *Horace* and *Cinna*. **Horace** was composed with an evident desire to follow the rule; it is the most finished type of the Roman tragedy, with some historical probability, and the triumph of duty over passion. The plot of *Horace* is borrowed from Livy, Book 1, ch. XXIV-XXV. Alba and Rome are at war; but as there have been many alliances between the families of the two cities, it is decided to avoid the spilling of blood, and to choose three champions in each camp; the issue of their combat to decide the supremacy of one or the other city. On the Roman side the choice falls upon the three Horaces, and on the other, the three Curiaces. One of the Horaces had married Sabine, sister of the Curiaces, while one of the Curiaces was betrothed to Camille, a sister of the Horaces. Nevertheless, the chosen



A REPRESENTATION OF *Le Cid*  
in the costumes of court contemporaries.  
After a small picture from the edition of the Works of  
Corneille, published in 1714.



warriors accept their painful duty. The father of the Horaces awaits news of the combat, when Julie comes to tell him that two of his sons died in the first shock of battle, and the third ran away. Old Horace curses the surviving coward, and prepares himself to kill him with his own hands when he returns. But he learns from Valère that his son's flight was only a ruse, and that Rome has triumphed. — The young victor comes back, bringing the spoils of the Curiaces; he meets his sister Camille, who reproaches him for the death of her betrothed, and launches curses against Rome. In fury, Horace kills her. For this crime he must come to judgment, for which purpose the King, Tull, comes expressly to his house, hears the pleas of Valère and his father Horace, and absolves the young warrior, who has only to submit to a ceremony of expiation. That tragedy achieved complete success; and Corneille, with a deference perhaps partly ironical, dedicated it to Cardinal Richelieu. — **Cinna** shows some exaggeration of the heroism of the human will. If *Auguste* is one of the finest incarnations of the *morale cornélienne*, *Emilie* is the first type of those passionate women who, adorable as they may be, lack psychological probability. *Cinna* was dedicated, as we know, to M. de Montoron, a celebrated financier of the time, whence the saying, "a dedication à la Montoron." *Cinna* is taken from a passage in Seneca's treatise on Clemency. Corneille invents the characters of *Emilie* and *Maxime*. He supposes that *Cinna*, a descendant of Pompey, is led into a conspiracy against *Auguste* by *Emilie* whom he loves. *Emilie*, whose father *Toranius* perished in the proscriptions formerly ordered by *Auguste* (*Octave*), desires revenge, and although *Auguste* has her brought up in his own house like his daughter, she has promised to marry whoever will kill the emperor. Meanwhile *Auguste*, weary of his power, consults the two leaders of the conspiracy. *Cinna* and *Maxime*, as to whether he ought to abdicate: *Cinna*, who wishes to kill *Auguste* while he is emperor, advises him to keep his empire, to the great astonishment of *Maxime*, who is ignorant of *Cinna*'s real feelings. When he learns that *Cinna* is conspiring out of love for *Emilie*, he denounces him to *Auguste*. The Emperor, deeply moved by this news, expresses in a celebrated monologue his anguish, and remorse and hesitation. He sends for *Cinna*, and confronts him with the fact, then receives from *Emilie* herself the avowal of her ingratitude, and finally discovers that *Maxime* too has deceived him. Then, rising above his legitimate anger, he pardons them all in order to prove that he is master of himself as of the world.

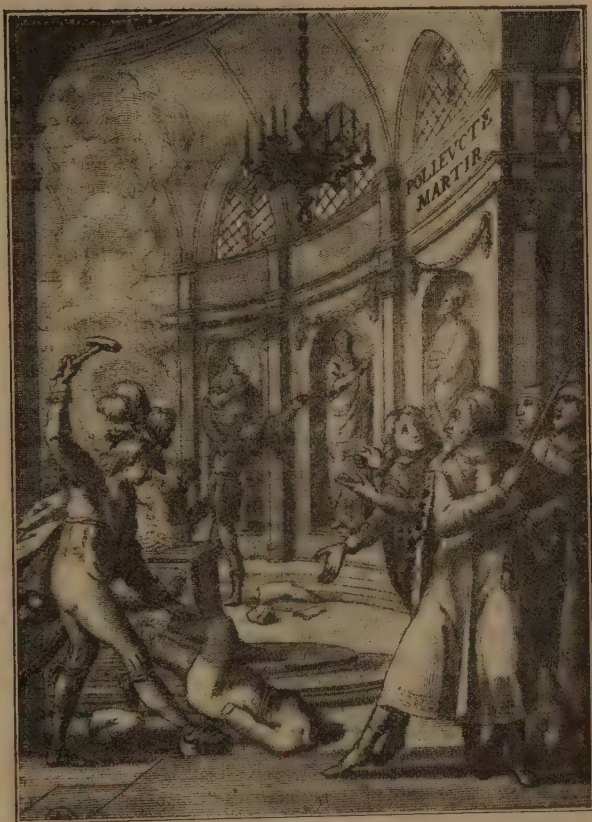
In 1641-1642, Corneille, who frequented the Hôtel de Rambouillet, composed two madrigals for the *Guirlande de Julie* (1). He read, in the "blue chamber", his *Polyeucte*, the Christian inspiration of which was unfavorably received. All the same, the piece had great success in 1643.—**Polyeucte** is borrowed from an account of the martyrdom of St. Polyeucte, in Mélitène, Armenia, in the fourth century, written by Surius, a Latin historian of the sixteenth century. Corneille takes from Surius the names of *Polyeucte*, his wife *Pauline*, his father-in-law *Félix*, his friend *Néarque*, and the martyrdom. He invented the character of *Sévère*. — In the first Act we learn that *Polyeucte* has recently married *Pauline*, and that his friend *Néarque*, who is a Christian, has some difficulty in leading *Polyeucte* to be baptised. *Pauline* had been asked in marriage at Rome by a Knight named *Sévère*, but *Félix* has refused and arriving in Armenia as governor, he causes his daughter to marry *Polyeucte*, *Pauline* being resigned to the marriage because she believes *Sévère* to be dead. Still she is troubled by a dream in which she has seen *Sévère* living and glorious, and *Polyeucte* killed among an assemblage of Christians.— Not only is *Sévère* still living, but he has become the Emperor's favourite, and he comes to Mélitène to offer sacrifice. *Pauline* sees him again, tells him that she is married, and bids him an eternal farewell. But, during the sacrifice, *Polyeucte*, who has just been baptised, breaks the idols. He is arrested, and

(1) See the *Cours de Littérature dramatique*, by SCHLEGEL, tr. by N. de Saussure.



made to be present at the torture of Néarque; Pauline and Félix try to bring him to abjure his faith, but he resists everything. More than this, he sends for Sévère to come to his prison, and bequeaths Pauline to him. Pauline would have but to accept a solution which gives her the one she to formerly loved. She goes even further and commands Sévère to ask for the pardon of the husband whom it is her duty to save. Félix refuses the pardon, believing it is only a ruse of Sévère, and Polyeucte is put to death. Then Pauline declares herself a Christian also, and Félix himself is converted by the merits of the martyr. Contemporary audiences — (if we may believe a famous mot of the Dauphiness, in speaking of *Pauline*: "There," she said, "is the most decent woman in the world who does not love her husband") — seemed to have enjoyed above all the almost romantic situation of *Pauline* between *Sévère* and *Polyeucte*, and the discussion of the psychology of gallantry which it inspired. In the eighteenth century, *Polyeucte* was considered a fanatic, and *Sévère*, a true "philosopher", attracted everybody's sympathy. In our time, the martyr has taken first place in the piece; what interests us in him is the triumph of religious feeling over human duty, and in *Pauline*, the development of a love which turns irresistibly from the entirely human and ordinary merit of *Sévère* to the better understood and superior merit of *Polyeucte*. This tragedy, in its action, nature and style, the proportion of its parts, the equilibrium and climax of the sentiments, the profundity of its human and religious morals, is the perfect type of the *cornélien* play.

**Pompée** was played in the same year. The hero, whose name entitles the piece, does not appear. Still alive during the first act, since *Plolémée* discusses with his confidants



POLYEUCTE

In "Spanish costumes."

After the original edition of *Polyeucte* (1643).

whether to receive him or deliver him over to César, he dies during the *entr'acte*. César, far from thanking *Ptolémée* for having rid him of his rival, turns away with horror from this severed head; he would have pardoned, and he threatens *Ptolémée* with his anger. Meanwhile the King of Egypt plots against César, and the latter is warned by *Cornélie*, *Pompée's* widow, who would like very well to revenge herself on César, but reserves his punishment to herself, for, as a true Roman woman, she cannot consent to César's fall through the treason of a Slavish king. *Ptolémée* is killed; César gives his throne to *Cléopâtre*, whom he loves, and sets *Cornélie* at liberty. — *Pompée* ranks with *Cinna* by its long political deliberations, its Machiavellian maxims, its emphasis on the will and on grandeur of soul. For the first time, love is reduced to gallantry, and is nearly independent of the chief action. Even though the character of *Cléopâtre* and her interviews with César should be eliminated, the piece on the whole would be intact, Corneille was to practise and exaggerate this method more and more. — *Pompée* was dedicated to Mazarin.

1643 was a very fruitful year; Corneille returned to Spanish subjects, and to comedy, and wrote **Le Menteur**, which was imitated from Alarcon's *Vérité suspecte*. A young nobleman, named Dorante, returns from the University of Poitiers, where he studied law. Accompanied by his valet, Cliton, he takes a walk in the Tuileries gardens, where he meets two young girls, Clarice and Lucrèce. Clarice stumbles, and Dorante rushes to give her his hand, profiting by the incident to make love to her. He tells her that he has just returned from the war in Germany, where he distinguished himself, and that he is staying in Paris because he loves her. But, owing to an inexact report of his valet, he thinks Clarice is named Lucrèce. Later he tells his friends that he gave a magnificent fête on the water the night before to this same Lucrèce. As his father, Gêronte, wishes him to marry, Dorante, who is seriously in love with Clarice, declares that he has already been married at Poitiers to a certain Orphise. Dorante's confusion of the two girl's names brings about several rather complicated episodes. Finally Gêronte finds out all the lies of his son, and Dorante ends by marrying the true Lucrèce. *Le Menteur* met with great success, and Corneille produced in 1644 **La Suite du Menteur**, again using the characters of *Dorante* and his valet *Cliton*, and which was imitated from Lope de Véga's comedy *Aimer sans savoir qui*. *La Suite* did not have the same success as *Le Menteur*.

1644. **Rodogune, princesse des Parthes**, marked a new stage in the evolution of Corneille's genius. He took the subject from the Greek historian Appianus, whose work he had read in a Latin translation. The piece has that extraordinary and improbable grandeur which Corneille had begun to cultivate. — *Cléopâtre*, queen of Syria, has two sons, *Antiochus* and *Séleucus*. At the Syrian court is *Rodogune*, Princess of the *Parthes*, whom the two young princes are in love with. Now, *Cléopâtre* and *Rodogune* hate each other: It is a question of former jealousy — which the twenty-four hours rule prevents from being made sufficiently clear. So *Cléopâtre* says to her sons: "Whichever one of you kills *Rodogune* shall inherit the throne", while *Rodogune* says, on her part, "I will give my hand to whichever one of you kills *Cléopâtre*". Now the princes love their mother as much as they love *Rodogune*, and each other no less. Thus the situation would tend to remain stationary, because of the complete balance between love and hate. But *Cléopâtre* decides to act, and causes the murder of one of her sons. *Antiochus*, is on the point of marrying *Rodogune* when he hears of the murder of *Séleucus*, whose last words warn him to beware of a hand which is dear to him. He is about to drink from the cup *Cléopâtre* offers, when *Rodogune* stops him. To put an end to suspicion, *Cléopâtre* drinks first from the cup, in which she has placed poison, hoping to draw *Rodogune* and her son on to the same death. But the action of the poison is too quick; her pallor betrays her, and she dies in despair, wishing to the married pair sons who shall resemble her. The fifth act of *Rodogune* possesses dramatic beauty which seems admirable even

now; but, unfortunately, we must comprehend four obscure and painful acts before we arrive at the situation. —*Rodogune* is dedicated (1660 edition) to the great Condé.

After **Théodore**, *vierge et martyre*, which was a failure, Corneille produced that masterpiece of plot complication, **Héraclius**, *empereur d'Orient* (1646), the subject having been taken from Cardinal Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*. The Emperor of Constantinople, *Maurice*, has been dethroned and killed by *Phocas*; his children have been murdered before his eyes; but the nurse of little *Héraclius*, son of *Maurice*, has saved him by substituting her own son for him. On this circumstance hangs the whole play. But this melodramatic imbroglio is complicated by another substitution. In short, Corneille himself admits that this piece "must be seen more than once in order to be completely understood." —*Héraclius* is dedicated to Chancellor Séguier.

In 1650, Corneille gave a "pièces à machines", **Andromède**, with music by Assoucy, at the *Petit-Bourbon* theatre. —The same year he once more returned to Spanish subjects, and to a mixed genre, heroic comedy, in his **Don Sanche d'Aragon**. This piece, "entirely invented," according to the author himself (except the first act and the final unravelling), presents the story of a soldier of fortune, *Carlos*, who is in love with *Isabel*, Queen of Castile. She loves the valiant *Carlos*, but struggles against her love until, through a romantic unravelling of plot, it is discovered that *Carlos* is no other than *Don Sanche*, King of Aragon. There is an element of bravery running all through this piece which gives it an especially chivalric tone. The first act, full of unexpected turns, is written in a lofty and picturesque style, and is somewhat romantic à la *Ruy Blas*. — At the beginning of *Don Sanche* (which should be read), Corneille published a letter to M. de Zuylichem, counsellor and secretary to the Prince of Orange, in which he explains the nature and rules of heroic comedy. This is a piece of critical theory which is curious in comparison with the ideas Diderot was to advance more than a century later.

1651. Corneille, who has just produced *Rodogune* and *Héraclius*, truly melodramatic pieces, and *Don Sanche*, which was of an entirely new genre, returned in **Nicomède** to pure tragedy, founded upon the analysis of character and the play of sentiments. But we must not be astonished to find in it a certain freedom of style which reminds us of his recent heroic comedy, and a very romantic denouement.

The action of *Nicomède* takes place in the second century before Christ, at the court of the King of Bithynie, Prusias. The Romans have brought up in their country a son by Prusias' second marriage, Attale, whom they find a docile vassal, and they seek to prevent Prusias' elder son, Nicomède, from ascending the throne. The latter, who is in love with Laodice, queen of Armenia, is a courageous captain, haughty and independent, who sees through the designs of the Romans, and opposes Flaminius, their ambassador. Rival in politics as well as love of his brother Attale, he tries to force Prusias to resist and to leave him the throne in spite of Flaminius and the mother of Attale, Arsinoé. But Prusias has no character, and comes to an understanding with Flaminius to rid himself of a son who troubles and annoys him. Fortunately Attale, whose generosity defeats the designs of his protectors, saves Nicomède from death; and Nicomède, seeking in his turn to prove himself as noble as Attale, gives back to his father the throne which the people, rebelling, wish him to have. Prusias therefore remains king, thanks to his son Nicomède, to whom he is grateful; but he wishes to preserve the friendship of the Romans also.

Finally the year 1652 marked, with **Pertharite**, King of the Lombards, the end of Corneille's first period. This tragedy has sometimes been connected with Racine's *Andromaque*, with which, in fact, it shares a similarity of situation in the beginning.

*Pertharite*, King of the Lombards, has disappeared, and his kingdom is usurped by Duke Grimoald. To consecrate his usurpation, he wishes to marry *Pertharite's* wife *Rodelinde*, and to gain her consent, he says to her, "If you do not marry me, your son



dies." *Rodelinde* replies, "I will not marry you until you have first killed my son." Fortunately *Pertharite* returns; *Grimoald* shares the kingdom with him and marries a princess who loves him. *Pertharite* is agreeable to read, as all *Cornaille's* work is, even the least good; but it must be admitted that not one of the characters in this piece is endowed with either truth or life.

When *Cornaille* returned to the theatre with his *Œdipe* in 1659, after an interval of seven years, he was at first very successful. *Œdipe* amazes us nowadays—like the *Œdipe* that *Voltaire* was to write in 1718—by the complexity of the plot. It seems to us that the loves of *Thésée* and *Dircé* are but ill-assorted with the terrible story so simply told by *Sophocles*.—In 1660, *Cornaille* wrote the *Toison d'Or*, a *pièce à machines* like *Andromède*.—In 1662, he began, with *Sertorius*, a series of political tragedies in which "great state interests" hold first place, and love is either reduced to insipid gallantry or totally subordinated to reason. *Sertorius* is a Roman general at war in Spain, and an adversary of *Sylla*. He is loved, or rather he is "asked in marriage," for political reasons, by two women: *Viriate*, Queen of the Lusitanians, and *Aricie*, divorced wife of *Pompée*. Meanwhile, *Pompée* comes to *Sertorius's* camp, and their interview makes one of *Cornaille's* finest political scenes; his second wife, *Emilie*, being dead, he takes back *Aricie*. *Sertorius* can then marry *Viriate*, but he is murdered by his lieutenant, *Perpenna*, who himself loves the queen. *Pompée* punishes the traitor. Omitting the murders, a charming *vaudeville* could be made of this tragedy.—We may briefly note the other pieces: *Sophonisbe* (1663), a subject already handled by *Mairet* in 1629; *Othon* (1684); *Agésilas* (1666), a kind of heroic and gallant comedy, written in free verse, and very interesting to read; *Attila* (1667), the action of which is too complicated while the denouement, though true to history, is almost laughable (*Attila* dying of a bleeding nose); but it contains a few finely energetic tirades; *Tite et Bérénice* (1670), a subject handled in the same year by *Racine*. (It is said that *Henriette d'Angleterre* incited the old poet and his junior to this rivalry, but the question is now debated (1). A comparison of the two pieces is very interesting, showing how *Cornaille* complicates while *Racine* simplifies the subject. In *Racine's* play there are three characters, *Bérénice*, *Titus* and *Antiochus*; in *Cornaille's*, *Titus* should marry *Domitie*, but *Domitie* loves *Domitian*, and the two try to force the Senate to authorise the marriage of *Titus* and *Bérénice* in order to do away with every obstacle to their own union. The Senate consents, but *Bérénice* voluntarily renounces the hand of *Titus*. Doubtless, *Racine's* influence shows somewhat in *Tite et Bérénice*, as in *Agésilas* we may see that of *Quinault*.—But the piece in which *Cornaille*, who seems to have given up gallantry, best represents love is *Psyché*. This *tragédie-ballet*, given in 1671 at the Louvre, is not entirely *Cornaille's*; but all those parts which are elegiac and impassioned belong to him (2). Nothing could be finer and more penetrating than the declaration made by Love to *Psyché*, or the laments of Love. —*Pulchérie* (1672) is a kind of heroic comedy; *Suréna* (1674) presents, in *Eurydice*, a beautiful female character. These last pieces, despite their uninteresting plot, are written in a powerful and variegated style,—a quality which never failed in *Cornaille's* works.

**Cornaille and the Aristotelian rules.** — We have seen that *Mairet* was the first to apply, in his *Sophonisbe*, the rule of the three unities. *Cornaille* did not submit absolutely to this classic rule in *Le Cid*. It seems probable, indeed, that *Le Cid* was played, at the Marais, in a triplicate scene, showing on one side the king's palace, on the other the Count's house, and in the centre a

(1) *La Bérénice de Racine*, by M. G. MICHAUT, Paris, 1908.

(2) *Molière* had drawn up the plan of piece, but he could only versify the prologue, the first act, the first scene of the second act, and the first of the third.



street in Seville. But the rule of twenty-four hours is observed, and employed with rare economy. Beginning with *Horace*, Corneille subjected his work to the rules, not without cavilling and protesting. We know that he wrote, for his complete edition of 1660, critical examinations of his pieces (from *Mélie* to *OEdipe*), and that at the same time he published three *discours* (one at the beginning of each volume): *De l'Utilité et des Parties du poème dramatique*, *De la Tragédie et des Moyens de la traiter selon la vraisemblance ou le nécessaire*, *Des Trois unités d'action, de jour et de lieu*. If Corneille thought it necessary at this time to discuss his system and each one of his pieces, it was doubtless to refute the criticism addressed directly or indirectly to him by the Abbé d'Aubignac, in his *Pratique du théâtre* (1637), to which Corneille, however, never refers. We feel, in these very Normand (1) discussions, that Corneille appears to conform to the rules, but widens their scope to accommodate them to certain liberties which he has taken. The truth is that in choosing historical subjects, and complicating them, Corneille is too much limited by the twenty-four hours rule, and by unity of place; but that, on the other hand, his genius lying especially in the reduction of the action to one essential crisis of will, the unities would there have been a useful constraint. He did not suspect that these same crises of energy, if diluted by several days' action, would not give the same impression of firmness and heroism.

Furthermore, he always believed in submitting to fictional rules imposed by a small group of connoisseurs, whom, since the appearance of *Le Cid*, he did not wish to displease; he did not realise that the entire public, composed almost exclusively since 1636 of men of the world and educated citizens, had an instinctive desire for probability, which Racine, coming after him, was so easily to realise.

**Corneille's "Invention." To what Extent he was Historian.** — Where did Corneille find the subjects for his tragedies? Leaving aside *Médée*, *Le Cid*, *OEdipe*, he did not imitate anybody's pieces, but chose his subjects from history, because he believed that "the subject of a fine tragedy should be extraordinary;" but at the same time, he wished it to be authentic. He sought examples of human energy. He needed instances, at once rare and true, in which the will does not express itself except at the price of an effort, but a quite human effort. He put aside the marvellous, therefore, as he did the banal; and it was really history, which is in a way the register of superhuman actions of the human will, which must inspire him.

He could not however be called an historian, if we exact from the historian a scrupulous respect for truth; because Corneille adds to and takes from the facts furnished him by the texts (*Horace*, *Cinna*, *Nicomède*, etc.). But the chief

(1) The people of Normandy are great litigants.

point is that, in these modifications, he never falsified the general truth, but profited by it, on the contrary, to enable us to understand better the psychology of a nation and of a celebrated character, or the hidden and intimate laws of events. It cannot be denied that *Horace*, *Auguste*, *Nicomède*, *Sertorius*, even *Attila*, make us understand by their sentiments and their speeches that they had to do what they did. This is especially true of the Romans.—Roman history tempted Corneille particularly, because it is, more than any other, a collection of fine examples. If we regard it as a whole, or in each of its episodes—unless we see in it, with Bossuet, the hand of Providence—it must be admitted that it was a prodigy of the human will. But the Roman, taken by himself, is essentially a hero. He did not invent stoicism, but it seems to have been made for him. He conquered his passions as he did the enemies of his country; he was master of himself as of the world; and he knew it, and proclaimed it in his dissertations as well as his actions. Finally, the Romans spoke a strong and sonorous language, full of solid maxims and of vigorous and superb reasoning—so much so, that these Romans, who could not possibly write tragedies, became by their exploits, their psychology and their style, incomparable heroes for future tragedies.—It is therefore not surprising that Corneille loved them and constantly returned to them, and that he gave the Roman language and characteristics to nearly all his heroes, even if they were Byzantine or Syrian.

**The Action.** — When he had found his action in history—whether in Livy (*Horace*), Appienus (*Rodogune*), Surlin (*Polyeucte*), or Cardinal Baronius (*Héraclius*), was Corneille satisfied to take it and make it dramatic and probable by a deep analysis of the characters? No, he reinforced and complicated it. To bring out the worth of human energy, “*hors de l'ordre commun il lui crée des fortunes*” (*Horace*).—It is not enough for him that a sister of the *Horaces* has been betrothed to one of the *Curiaces*; he supposes furthermore that a sister of the *Curiaces* is married to one of the *Horaces*. Thus, what was already striking in history, the sacrifice of love to patriotism, becomes here still more surprising.—It does not suffice him that *Polyeucte*, recently married to *Pauline*, prefers martyrdom to her; a rival, *Sévère*, must appear between the husband and wife, to show that jealousy has no hold on *Polyeucte*, and to give *Pauline*, the chance to choose and to manifest, on her part also, the strength of her will.—It is not enough for him that *Auguste* should pardon one ingrate alone, *Cinna*; *Auguste's* adopted daughter, *Émilie*, must have been the soul of this conjuration, and *Maxime* also should have been a traitor; and thus the forgiveness should be a triple victory over what was the most legitimate anger.

In all these reinforcements of the action, Corneille, in his masterpieces, does not pass the limits of human energy, but we feel that he is more and more attracted by difficulty; his heroes become acrobats in will-power, they create obstacles for themselves to triumph over, and their victory or sacrifice has

nothing to do with human grandeur. Such, for instance, are the rivalries of *Cléopâtre* and *Rodogune*, of *Viriate* and *Aricie* in *Sertorius*, the struggle between *Grimoald* and *Rodelinde* in *Pertharite*; actions which only exist because the poet willed them, and which do not arise from the actual, but from the possible.

Wishing to bring out before everything the will of his heroes, Corneille had



SCENERY AND COSTUMES OF *Andromède*  
Musical tragedy given by Corneille in 1650.  
From the print by F. Chauveau.

to construct external and dominating actions. We, no doubt, find occasion to manifest our energy in the daily struggle with our passions; but, for this struggle to become dramatic, it is necessary that we should come upon some unexpected difficulty, before which all ordinary courage would be powerless. Our merit is greater if, after the first danger, we fall into a second even more serious, and if in proportion to the increasing danger we also increase in strength and audacity. These obstacles might be external, but the play of our free will would all the same be essentially intimate. And that is why Corneille's actions are simultaneously artificial and psychological.—*Le Cid*: it does not depend upon *Rodrigue* that his father shall be insulted by the count, nor

that the Moors land at Seville; but it rests with him to call out the count and kill him, notwithstanding his love for *Chimène*, and to risk an unequal and heroic combat with the Moors.—*Cinna*: *Auguste* is not responsible for the fact that *Émilie*, his adopted daughter, *Cinna* whom he has loaded with benefits, and *Maxime* his confidant, all betray him; but it rests with him to pardon.—*Horace*: it was not the fault of the old *Horace*, nor his son, nor *Sabine* nor *Curiace* that the Romans and the the Albanians chose their champions as they did; but they must all accept stoically this terrible situation, and prefer honour to their family.

Such action is ascending; the situation grows worse from act to act; events seem to defy the moral resistance of the characters. In *Horace*, it is a great blow to *Curiace* and *Sabine* that the *Horaces* are chosen by fate; but what a *coup de théâtre* when the *Curiaces* themselves have been chosen by *Albe*! The elder *Horace* is already profoundly troubled, seeing his son-in-law set out for a battle in which they must kill each other; but what an ordeal for his heart of a Roman and father when he learns the death of two of his sons and the flight of the third! And when he finally learns the truth, there is his glorious son who disgraces himself by the murder of his sister, and is menaced with a criminal's death! Thus the action increases constantly in order to excite and prove the energy of the characters. Analyse from this point of view *Cinna*, *Polyeucte*, *Pompée* and *Nicomède*.

**The Characters and the Passions.** — We can readily imagine what sort of character would be indicated to play such roles. La Bruyère said that Corneille depicted men as they ought to be. In fact, his heroes incarnate, as we have already said, a self-controlled will, a reason which dominates sensibility, and a moral clear-sightedness always distrustful of itself. They are animated by great emotions: filial duty (*Rodrigue*); honour (*Don Diègue*); patriotism (*Horace*, *Nicomède*); mercy (*Auguste*); love of God (*Polyeucte*); conjugal fidelity (*Pauline*, *Cornélie*); royal dignity (*Nicomède*), etc. The secondary characters themselves are self-willed: the Count de Gormas, *Félix*, *Ptoïmée*, *Arsinoé* are severely so. Heroines, also, devote their will to the pursuit of their own personal satisfaction or of their vengeance, such as *Camille*, *Émilie*, *Rodogune* and *Cléopâtre*. All, as we see, represent in different degrees and with different objects energy in action.

What place does Corneille give to love which, of all the passions, most often creates the conflicts of tragedy? Corneille's declaration in his letter to Saint-Evremond in 1666, is always quoted in answer: "I have believed until now that love was a passion too liable to weakness to be given the dominant part in a heroic piece; I would have it ornament the drama, but not make part of its substance." But here Corneille only characterises a small number of his plays, in which love is, in fact, only an ornament which could be omitted, such



as *Héraclius*, *Nicomède*, *OEdipe*, *Attila*. In nearly all the others, love, far from being merely an ornament, creates the moral difficulty and renders the duty superhuman. The nature of *Le Cid* would be changed if *Rodrigue* and *Chimène* did not love each other; it is his love for *Émilie* that causes *Cinna* to conspire, and it is because of love that *Maxime* betrays *Cinna*; without love, what would become of the subject of *Polyeucte*, or even of *Rodogune*, not to speak of *Othon* and *Agésilas*? In the greater number of Corneille's tragedies, then, love is an element which forms part of the body of the subject; but we should add these qualifying statements: a) this love is not, as in Racine's plays, the master passion and the mainspring; it is engaged in a struggle with some superior interest and must be vanquished; b) this love results from the free choice of the will and of reason; it is founded on esteem; however deeply the hero falls in love, he remains master of himself, and is never plunged into that fatality with which Shakespeare, Racine and Musset have so profoundly imbued the mystery; and the object of his love may change if his esteem is transferred elsewhere by the dictates of reason. Thus Corneille purifies, idealises and transforms into moral energy a passion which generally, and more than all our other emotions, causes us the most trouble and robs us most often of our clear-sightedness. Consider *Pauline*: if she were an ordinary woman, even a very virtuous one, she would leave *Polyeucte* to perish, as she only married him out of obedience, and she would legitimately return to *Sévère*, whom she formerly loved, and who always loved her passionately. But *Pauline*, a true daughter of Corneille, only loved *Sévère* for his courage and virtue, and she no sooner perceived in Po-



A REPRESENTATION AT THE PALAIS CARDINAL THEATRE,  
IN THE PRESENCE OF LOUIS XIII

*From a contemporary print.*

This theatre was built by Richelieu in his own palace (to-day it is Palais-Royal). The possession of it was given later to Molière by Louis XIV.

*lyeucte* a superior virtue and a strange courage, than her heart turned irresistibly towards him.

**Morality of Corneille's Plays.** — This empire of the will over the passions, even those which are most natural, is the morality of Corneille's dramas. But we must go further into this subject, and explain why Corneille's dramatic works are "a school for greatness of soul" (Voltaire).

a) In his finest tragedies, Corneille sets forth "moral problems" and "cases of conscience." The leading "example" is rare and tragic; but it evokes analogous cases of a more ordinary character, to which the lesson may be applied. And, as we cannot repeat enough, the beauty of these problems lies, not in the fact that the hero must choose between duty, and passion (for the most elementary morality obliges us to choose duty and in this choice there may be merit, indeed, but not grandeur and still less heroism), but that he must choose between two duties, which at first appeal equally to him, but one of which must triumph over the other. Be sure that *Rodrigue*, *Curiace*, *Auguste*, *Pauline*, would not hesitate an instant if they only had to choose between virtue and vice, between courage and cowardice. Must not *Auguste*, for instance, hesitate between his duty as a statesman, which is to punish, and his duty as a man, which is to forgive? May he not fear to deceive himself, and has he not good reason to search his conscience with anguish?

b) And now, what principle will determine the choice of the hero? This is where Corneille's moral grandeur will be shown. First, this hero must consider, and not without trouble, the two courses which appeal to him; he must appear to us to be free and clear-seeing; he must examine exhaustively all the aspects, difficulties and consequences of his action, and must decide by the free choice of his reason. This reasoning gives the hero a sure criterion, and shows him how to select between the real and the specious duty. The true duty is recognised by the fact that it demands of us a more complete sacrifice and a greater effort.—Thus, to punish as a statesman is his duty; but pride and vengeance are also satisfied thereby. To pardon is a sacrifice, nay, in the eyes of the crowd an avowal of weakness, a voluntary abdication. Therefore, *Auguste's* true duty is to pardon.—To yield to the anxiety of a woman one loves, to avoid everything which could separate one from her, and to keep the vows one has made to her, is a duty; but this duty has its own present sweetness and reward. To obey the secret voice of God who calls you, to go to baptism and break down idols, is to pay for future reward by sacrificing life and happiness. Therefore, *Polyeucte* goes to be baptised.

c) But will this hero, once he has accomplished his painful duty, be subjected to a moment of weakness before the ruin of his happiness, or of his approaching death? Will he find himself simply a man again, and regret his decision? Never. To *Chimène*, *Rodrigue* says, with his heart bleeding from the

sacrifice : " *Je le ferais encor si j'avais à le faire.* " To *Pauline* and *Félix*, *Polyeucte*, ready to face suffering, gives the same answer. The young *Horace* says not one word of repentance concerning the murder of his sister. *Pauline* is not sobered by *Polyeucte*'s death, but is ready for torture in her turn.

d) Finally even the style of *Cornicille*'s works justifies the expression "school" for greatness of soul. They are full of pleas, arguments, dissertations. There is not one of these heroes who does not seek to convince his adversaries, or to convince himself of the excellence of his choice. The whole theory of true duty, as distinguished from specious duty, is found in them. *Rodrigue* proves to *Chimène* that he was morally obliged to make her an orphan; and *Chimène* proves to him, on her part, that she ought to have him

punished. *Pauline* proves to *Sévère* that she ought no longer to love him, and that he should ask pardon of *Polyeucte*. And in these speeches all the sophistries of passion or of pride are pursued and refuted, and we are taken through the most tenuous dialectical subtleties. It is great Stoical casuistry.



CINNA  
In "old costumes."  
From a small picture of the edition of 1643.



That is why Corneille's dramas arouse admiration. By his subjects, the nature of the passions he portrays, by the moral mechanism of his heroes, he lifts us above petty things or troubling temptations. Above all else, he gives us confidence in the strength of human nature. We do not know ourselves to be so well equipped for the struggle, so superior to ordinary life, so capable of knowing our true duty, so strong to fulfil it, so completely satisfied by the testimony alone of our own conscience. Hence rises a contagion of grandeur, flowing from *Le Cid*, from *Horace*, *Cinna*, *Polyeucte*, and even from *Pompée*, *Sertorius* and so many other pieces. For the beginning of heroism is the admiration of virtue.

**Corneille's style.** — Corneille is one of the greatest, perhaps the greatest French writer in verse. He is not a poet in the sense understood by the romanticists; his images are rare, he develops reasoning and ideas rather than an expression of emotion. He discusses, distinguishes, accuses, replies, drowns sensibility in the flood of the will: in short, he is an orator. He has all the finest rhetorical qualities; he also has their defects: subtlety, emphasis, declamation. But what strikes us most forcibly is the admirable propriety of a vocabulary generally abstract, in which all the shades and nuances of reasoning are indicated with marvellous sureness. Furthermore, this style always possesses a robust and truly dramatic seriousness, nothing trifling, uncertain or vague. In the theatre we realise the quite scenic vigour of such language and style. Finally, though Corneille excels in developing in a logical and orderly manner a series of arguments, and in composing long speeches (act II of *Cinna*, act IV of *Horace*, act IV of *Sertorius*, etc.), he is no less skilful in making short and inspiring maxims, or writing a touch-and-go dialogue, in which sparkling verses cross as in sword-play.

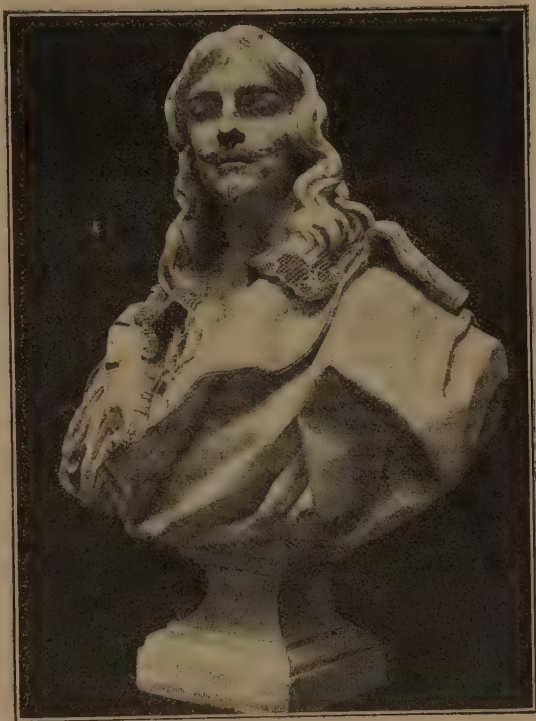
### III. — CORNEILLE'S CONTEMPORARIES.

We should not forget, in the glory of Corneille's genius, a few of his contemporaries, rivals or friends, who shared with him the favour of the public. The principal of these were Rotrou, du Ryer, Tristan L'Hermite, and Thomas Corneille.

**ROTROU (1609-1650).** — We know little of Rotrou's life, except that he possessed precocious genius, that he was one of the group of Richelieu's "five authors," and that he died heroically at Dreux, his native town, where he had gone to resume his post as *lieutenant-criminel* during an epidemic. We also know that he was a friend of Corneille, whom he called his master, while Corneille called him his father. He left quite a number of pieces, the chief



of which are, in order of time: *Les Sosies* (1636), a comedy imitated from Plautus' *Amphitryon* (compare with Molière); *Laure persécutée*, a tragi-comedy (1627); *La Sœur*, comedy (1643); *Saint Genest*, tragedy (1646); *Venceslas*, tragedy (1647); *Cosroès*, tragedy (1649). Two of these pieces are still worth reading: *Saint Genest*, the story of the comedian Genest who, while acting before the Emperor Diocletian and his court a play about the martyrdom of Adrien, was converted and passed from fiction to reality. In the scene of Genest's imprisonment, where he resists every effort to make him retract, we feel that Rotrou remembered *Polyeucte*. — In *Venceslas*, imitated from a Spanish play called "One cannot be Father and King," the situation of *Venceslas*, king of Poland, compelled to condemn his own son to death, is worthy of Corneille; and Act V might have been conceived and written by the author of *Horace* (1). — Rotrou, who died in his prime, not did perhaps completely develop his genius. In any event, he is, more than Thomas, the real brother of Corneille.



PORTRAIT OF ROTROU

By Jean-Jacques Caffieri (1725-1792).

**DU RYER** (1605-1658)  
achieved great success with

his contemporaries, especially with his *Alcionée* (1639), *Saul* (1639), *Esther* (1643) and *Amarillis*, a pastoral (1650). The tenderness and simplicity of his style was refreshing no doubt to his audiences, after Corneille.

**TRISTAN L'HERMITE** (1604-1655), also possessed a natural and often lyrical style. His most famous play is *Mariamne*, played at the Marais theatre

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 137; 2nd cycle, p. 375.

in 1636, several months before *Le Cid*. He is regarded as a precursor of Racine.

**THOMAS CORNEILLE** (1625-1709), brother of Pierre Corneille, was not less fecund than his elder, and achieved immense success : for instance, his *Timocrate* (1656) was played for six consecutive months. His *Ariane* (1672) and *Le Comte d'Essex* (1678), were retained for a long time in theatrical repertories. Thomas seems to have had all the qualities of the professional playwright; he liked romantic intrigue, and the accomplishments of a somewhat insipid gallantry. But he knew how to change his manner according to the public taste, and, without much originality, he succeeded in pleasing.

Thomas Corneille brings us, with his last pieces, to the period just following Racine's retirement.

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DECORATIVE FRIEZE BY JEAN LEPAUTRE (1618-1682).

## CHAPTER V.

### PASCAL AND PORT-ROYAL.

#### SUMMARY

1° **THE ABBEY OF PORT-ROYAL**, in the Chevreuse Valley, was reformed in 1608 by Angélique Arnauld. Abbé de **SAINT-CYRAN** became its spiritual director in 1633. Several laymen took up their retreat near this Abbey, and were called **Les Messieurs de Port-Royal**. The most famous of them were: **LE GRAND ARNAULD**, **ANTOINE LE MAÎTRE**, **NICOLE**, **LANCELOT**, etc.—**Jan-senism** is a theological doctrine concerning **grace**, taken from the **Augustinus**, a work by **JANSENIUS**, Bishop of Ypres. This doctrine penetrated into **Port-Royal** through Saint-Cyran. The Sorbonne caused the **Augustinus** to be condemned at Rome; Port-Royal submitted to the condemnation, but denied its justice.—**Casuistry** is the study of cases of conscience for the use of confessors; the Jansenists accused the Jesuits of being too complaisant casuists.—Port-Royal was persecuted, and ended by being destroyed in 1710.

2° **BLAISE PASCAL** (1623-1662) showed from infancy a remarkable capacity for mathematics. He became a Jansenist and retired to Port-Royal, where he wrote **Les Provinciales** and prepared an **Apologie** for religion.—**Les Provinciales** consists of eighteen **letters** on the question of grace, directed against the Jesuits. They are especially interesting now for their style, which ranges from humorous familiarity to eloquence.—After Pascal's death, fragments of his unfinished **Apologie** were published in 1670, under the title of **Pensées**.—Among the editions which followed must be noted that of Condorcet (1776), with notes by Voltaire, and Faugère's (1844), and Havet's (1851), in which the text has been restored from the manuscripts.—It is difficult to discover the order which Pascal would have followed in this apology for Christianity; we only know that he addressed the free-thinkers of his time, that he started with a psychological and

moral analysis of man, and that he sought to explain this **enigma** by the aid of philosophy and religions; only Christianity gave the solution.—As writer, Pascal was, above all, **natural**; he was the most true and sublime of seventeenth century geniuses.

3° **INFLUENCE OF PORT-ROYAL.** This influence was exerted upon individuals, upon preaching and upon education.

## I. — THE ABBEY OF PORT-ROYAL. PRINCIPAL JANSENIST WRITERS.



DECORATED LETTER  
of the XVII century.

**he Abbey of Port-Royal.** — There had existed in the valley of Chevreuse, six leagues from Paris, from the thirteenth century, an Abbey of women of the order of Citeaux. In 1602, Angélique Arnauld, daughter of Antoine Arnauld, a famous lawyer at the *Parlement* of Paris (1), was appointed Abbess. She seemed to have no vocation for this position, and nobody could have foreseen that she was to reform the very worldly life of this convent. But, in 1608, a sermon preached by a passing Capuchin, who spoke forcibly of the beauty of the religious life, so touched her heart that she resolved to bring back her abbey to a strict observance of the ancient rule. She met at

first with serious difficulty, even from her own family, to whom she found herself obliged to forbid free access to the Abbey (2). Little by little she succeeded in reforming several abbeys belonging to her order, and founded a new house in Paris, in 1625 (3). In 1633, Mother Angélique took as director for her nuns Duvergier de Hauranne, abbé de Saint-Cyran (1581-1643). It was through him that Jansenism penetrated into Port-Royal.

“ **Les Messieurs de Port-Royal** ”. — The Abbé of Saint-Cyran assembled nearby the Abbey of Port-Royal-des-Champs a certain number of pious laymen, who were resolved to lead a strictly Christian life, and who were called in the

(1) Antoine Arnauld was chiefly distinguished for his plea for the University against the Jesuits, in 1610.

(2) Read, in SAINT-BEUVE, *Port-Royal*. Book I, chap. III, *La journée du Guichet*.

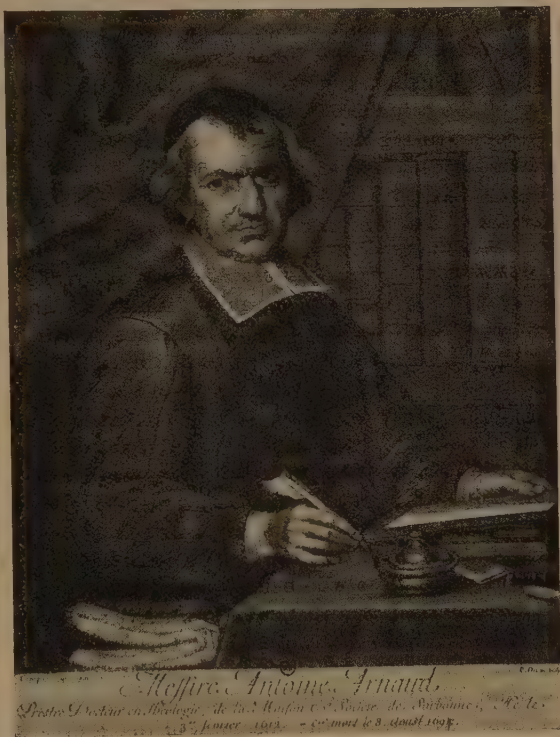
(3) *Port-Royal de Paris* was situated on the present boulevard de Port-Royal. Most of its buildings still survive, forming part of a department of Public Service of Paris.



seventeenth century Les Messieurs de Port-Royal. They included several members of the Arnauld family ; the elder son of Antoine, the lawyer (who died in 1619), Arnauld d'Andilly, retired there in 1645, and devoted the last thirty years of his life to works of learning and theology. Pomponne, who became Minister, and was involved in the Fouquet case (see Madame de Sévigné's Letters), was his son.—Another son of Arnauld d'Andilly, Arnauld de Luzancy, had joined Port-Royal before his father.—Three of his nephews were also established there : Antoine Le Maître (1608-1658), the greatest of seventeenth century lawyers, who, at the age of twenty-nine, renounced his successful legal career to devote himself to the *petites écoles* of Port-Royal; Isaac Le Maître or Le Maître de Sacy (1613-1684), who was a priest, and chaplain of Port-Royal. He made, among others, a translation of the Bible which has been often reprinted. Le Maître de Séricourt, the third nephew of Arnauld d'Andilly, died young.

But the most famous of the Arnaulds was the twentieth and last child of the lawyer, who was known as **THE GREAT ARNAULD** (1612-1694). Becoming a priest at twenty-nine, and doctor

of the Sorbonne, Arnauld distinguished himself in 1643 by the publication of a little tract, *De la Fréquente Communion*, which involved him in a quarrel with the Jesuits. He rallied, with all Port-Royal, to the doctrines of Jansenius upon grace (which we shall explain later on); and in 1656, because of two letters which he wrote to a Duke and Peer (the Duke de



ANTOINE ARNAULD

From the portrait painted by Philippe de Champaigne (1602-1674)  
engraved by Drevet.

Luynes) (4), he was formally expelled from the Faculty of Theology. After this, Arnauld wrote a great number of works of controversy and education; among the latter, the *Grammaire* and the *Logique* of Port-Royal, in collaboration with Nicole, are still known. In 1679, he exiled himself, and died in Brussels in 1694. The Great Arnauld, so admirable in character, such a pitiless logician, and so learned, did not leave any French work really finished and worthy of enduring; a fact which is admitted by his most fervent friends.

On the contrary, a few pages of **NICOLE** (1625-1695) bear re-reading, if not those of his numerous theological works, at least those of his *Essais de morale* (1671). We should not forget the dominant part played by Nicole in the teaching of the *petites écoles* of Port-Royal. It was he, also, who assisted Pascal in documenting *Les Provinciales*, and who translated the work into Latin, under the pseudonym of Wendrock.

**LANCELOT** (1615-1695) should also be mentioned; he composed *Le Jardin des racines grecques* for the *petites écoles* of Port-Royal.

**Jansenism.** — All philosophies and all religions regard the question of human liberty as one of the most difficult and important of all problems. The Christian religion puts this problem thus: Man, degraded by original sin, is incapable, of himself, of any merit; this he can only achieve if God sends him grace, a free gift which man owes to Jesus-Christ the Redeemer. But to what extent do we receive grace? Does God accord it to us each time we need it? Is it sufficient only to ask it? And, on the other hand, how can man keep his free will if God, who is all-powerful, gives or refuses, at His will, this indispensable help? It is plain that theologians should find endless subject of discussion in this question. Saint Augustine in the fourth century had to combat Pelagius, who held that man has no need of grace; and at the other extremity, in a way, are those who believe that man has no liberty at all, that he is predestined by God, and that, whatever may be his efforts or his virtues, he is saved or damned in advance. Orthodox theologians have discussed, and still freely discuss, this point of the degree of liberty and grace given to man: the disciples of Saint Thomas (*thomistes*) incline to more grace, and carry on the doctrine of Saint Augustine; the disciples of the Jesuit, Molina (*molinistes*), incline to more liberty. Now, we can readily understand that, by forcing either of these orthodox doctrines a little further, they might touch upon either heresy.

This is just what happened to Janssen, Bishop of Ypres, whose name has been Latinised into Jansenius. He defended, to the point of exaggeration, Saint Augustine's doctrine of grace. Dying in 1638, he left in manuscript a huge Latin work, *Augustinus*, which was published in 1640. This book was

(4) The Duke de Liancourt, a friend of Port-Royal, was refused the sacraments by the curé of Saint-Sulpice (Paris), under the pretext that his daughter was at boarding-school in the Port-Royal convent. Upon this, Arnauld wrote two letters to the Duke de Luynes, also a friend of Port-Royal. February 24 and July 10, 1655.

examined, like all theological writings, by the doctors of the Sorbonne, who gathered from it five heretical propositions, which they denounced to the Papal court of Rome, where they were condemned. The *molinistes*, in fact, were a majority at the Sorbonne, and they thought they had found in the *Augustinus* a dangerous tendency to predestination. In this they merely did their duty as theologians; and it must be added that, in seeking to preserve human liberty, so far as orthodox Catholicism permitted them, they were worthy of sympathy.

But Abbé de Saint-Cyran, spiritual director of Port-Royal, had been the friend and collaborator of Janssen. He had introduced his doctrines to Abbé Singlin, his assistant, and all the Arnaulds, and he was honestly convinced of the perfect legitimacy of the doctrines of the *Augustinus*. When the five propo-



VIEW FROM THE ABBEY OF PORT-ROYAL DES CHAMPS

*From a print of the XVII century.*

The abbey was entirely destroyed in 1740.

sitions had been extracted from the book and condemned, the partisans of Janssen declared that "they also condemned, with Rome, the heresies contained in the propositions, but that they denied that the propositions were in the *Augustinus*." Which was the same as saying: "Our enemies, the Jesuits, have forced or falsified the meaning of the book, this book whose doctrines they know we teach; they wish to subject us to suspicion and bring about our ruin by causing us to be suspected of heresy." So there was a double question in this quarrel, the question of right, and that of fact. As to the first, the Jansenists declared their submission in advance; they affirmed that they had never, in their own doctrine of grace, gone beyond that of Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas. As to the second, they stood their ground (1).

(1) Concerning the really extraordinary obstinacy of Port-Royal, we cannot do better than give

**Casuistry.** — A third question was joined with the others, that of casuistry. Les "Messieurs de Port-Royal", under the direction of men like Saint-Cyran and Singlin, practiced the most austere religion. They were genuine ascetics. Living in solitude, they had an abomination for worldly morals, which seemed to them in absolute contradiction to the Christian religion. Their adversaries, the Jesuits, who were the most fashionable confessors, were more indulgent. They were right in seeking to make religion lovable and attractive; but they were wrong if their object was ambition for their community, and to assure themselves of a greater number of penitents, drawn and held by their comparative indulgence. To form skilful confessors among their novices, warned in advance of all the sophistry a penitent might use, capable of examining and finding solutions for the most varied cases of conscience, they had written books upon casuistry, in which, with each sin, numerous examples were given and discussed. In the eyes of all Catholics, casuistry is in itself legitimate; it teaches the confessor to form an estimate of the sin which is confessed to him, and above all to make absolution dependent upon some formal promise given by the penitent. It is not, then, casuistry in itself which should be blamed, any more than legal processes or the practice of medicine, but the abuse which some confessors perhaps made of it, in warping the consciences of their penitents by culpable subtleties, and by an interested complaisance, permitting the practice of religion to those who used artifice with God (1).

In judging Pascal as an adversary of the casuists, it must not be forgotten that he was not in the class with Voltaire, or any contemporary critic, as regards the rationalistic, secular view of morals; but that he spoke in the name of a more severe Catholicism, that he himself went to confession, and practiced "total submission to his director" (M. Singlin); and that what he particularly accused the Jesuits of, was considering as venial sins those which he regarded as mortal. It might be possible, then, that Pascal might disavow, could he know them, those who today most felicitate him upon his antagonism to the Jesuits. But all the same he would be wrong in the sense that all

the opinion of M. F. Hémon, which we approve: "Let us admit," he said, "that the attitude the Jansenists adopted concerning these propositions, and the blame they received, seems somewhat childish. They sheltered a question of principle behind a question of fact. Ready, they said, to condemn these propositions if they were in Jansenius' work, they denied that they were there... Bossuet wrote, 'I believe that the propositions are in Jansenius, and that they are the soul of his book.' And Fénelon, 'The pretended question of fact is a coarse and odious illusion. Nobody really questions the true meaning of the text of Jansenius. Never was there text so clear, so well developed, so incapable of producing doubt. The same system is constantly under our eyes, and inculcated at every step.' Could the Jansenists have been ignorant of this? Would they not have been more sincere in recognising that the propositions, if they were not word for word in the text, were nevertheless in accordance throughout with Jansenius' very clear system of theology? They preferred to lose themselves in inextricable quibbles. It is painful to see a Pascal stoop to such chicanery; but Arnauld had set him the example." F. HÉMON, *Cours de Littérature*, Pascal, p. 6.

(1) There is an excellent discussion of this delicate question of casuistry in HENRI MICHEL, *Les Provinciales*, Introduction (Paris, Belin).



morals worthy of the name are connected one with another, and, like true Christian morality, repudiate subterfuges and arrangements, not to speak of mental reservations.

In his campaign, Pascal was followed by the curés of Paris and of Rouen, who united in order to obtain from the Pope the condemnation of *L'Apologie des casuistes*, written by Father Pirot; and the French clergy, in general assembly, followed the same course.

**History of Port-Royal, continued.** — We left the history of the famous abbey at the moment when the Jansenist quarrel began. We shall terminate this history before beginning our study of Pascal.

We have seen that Arnauld was expelled from the Faculty of Theology in 1656. Urged by his friends to defend himself before the world, he composed a sort of *mémoire* which, by the author's own admission, was not destined to make a sensation. It was then he is said to have remarked to

Pascal, who had entered Port-Royal the preceding year: "You who are young, you should do something." Pascal attacked the subject, and wrote the eighteen *Provinciales* between January 23 and March 24, 1657; and we shall see what success they met with.

Meanwhile, in 1656, Port-Royal had been profoundly moved, and its resistance upheld, by the "miracle of the Holy Thorn". Pascal's niece, Mlle Périer, a boarding scholar in the Paris house of Port-Royal, suffered from a lachrymal fistula, and was cured by the touch of a relic—a thorn from the crown worn by Christ during the Passion. The Jesuits wrote against this miracle; the nuns and the *Messieurs* saw in it a Divine intervention in their favour.

In 1661, an attempt was made to force the *Messieurs de Port-Royal* and the nuns to sign a formulary, the essential terms of which were: "I condemn by heart and by mouth the doctrine of the five propositions of Cornélius Jan-



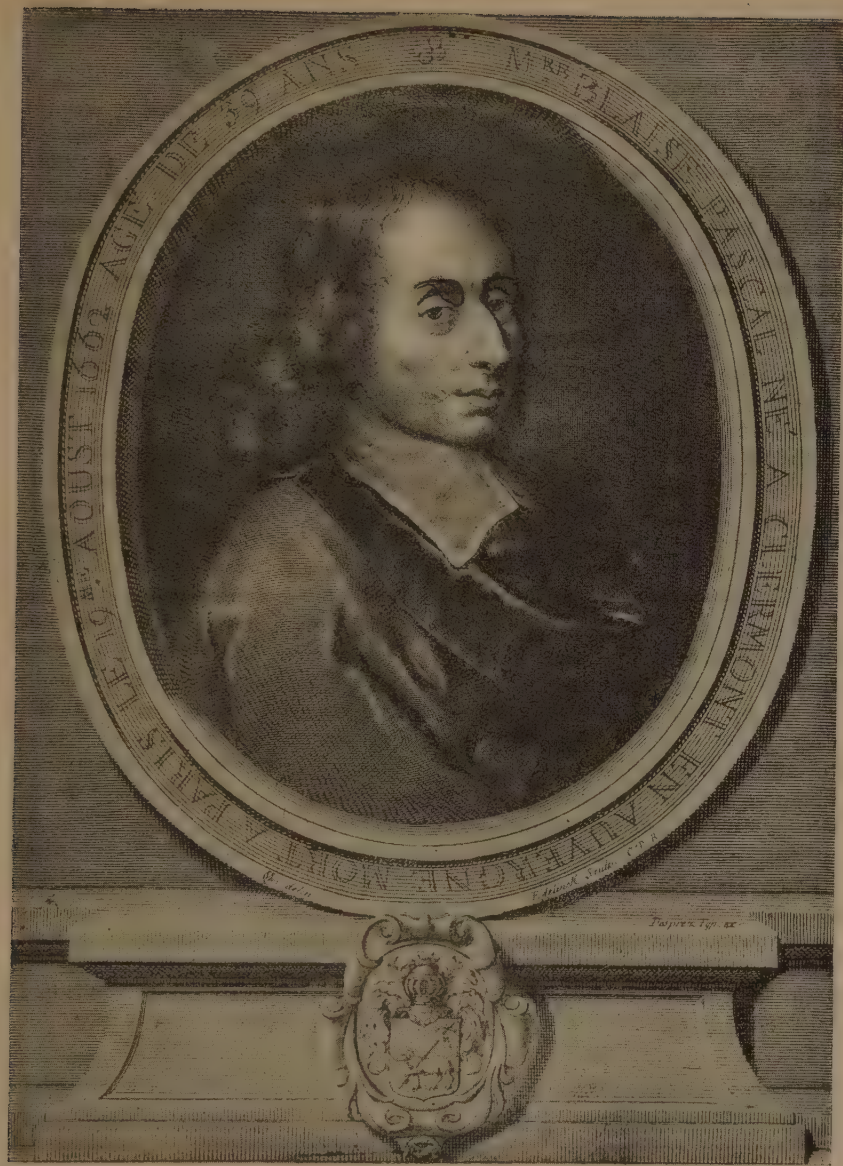
THE NUNS OF PORT-ROYAL IN THE " SOLITUDE ".

sénus, contained in his book entitled *Augustinus...* which doctrine is not that of Saint Augustine, Jansénus' explanation being other than the true meaning of that doctor." All Port-Royal refused to sign this formulary; and a very active persecution followed, resulting in the dispersion of the Paris nuns. But in September, 1668, Pope Clement IX caused a new formulary to be prepared, to which Port-Royal adhered, and thus the "Peace of the Church" was assured. Port-Royal now enjoyed a few quiet and prosperous years. The Duchess de Longueville, sister of the Great Condé, retired to the Abbey of Chevreuse, and her influence sustained Port-Royal. But, on her death in 1679, persecution again began. The Archbishop of Paris, Harlay de Champvallon, reduced the number of the nuns, and forbade them to receive boarding scholars. His successor, M. de Noailles, was benevolently inclined towards them, and it was for him that Racine wrote, in 1697, his *Abrégé de l'Histoire de Port-Royal*. But in 1706, the nuns having refused to adhere, without restriction, to a bull of Pope Clement XI upon "The Case of Conscience", things became worse. In 1709, the nuns were driven out of Port-Royal-des-Champs; and in 1710, the famous Abbey was destroyed by order of the king (1).

## II. — PASCAL (1623-1662).

**Biography.** — Blaise Pascal was born at Clermont-Ferrand on June 19, 1623. His father, Etienne Pascal, was then President of the *cour des aides* of Montferand; he resided in Paris from 1631 to 1639, where he occupied himself exclusively with the education of his children; from 1639 to 1648 he was *intendant* of the Rouen *généralité*, and died in 1651. — Blaise Pascal had an elder sister, Gilberte, who married Florin Périer, counsellor at the Court of Clermont, whose daughter was Marguerite Périer, the subject of the miracle of the Holy Thorn (1636), and his son Etienne Périer, first publisher of the *Pensées* (1670). Pascal's younger sister Jacqueline, entered the convent of Port-Royal under the name of Sister Sainte-Euphémie, and died in 1664, one year before her brother. — Etienne Pascal was a man of rare distinction and noble character. Very well grounded in mathematics, he observed early the tendency of his son. But desiring above everything that he should have a serious knowledge of ancient languages, "he avoided," says Mme Périer, in her *Vie de Blaise Pascal*, "talking to him of mathematics, and hid all the mathematical books, only promising him that he should have them when he had learned Latin and Greek. It was then, according to Mme Périer, that Blaise Pascal, ignorant even of the

(1) Concerning the history of Port-Royal, so important in connection with a study of ideas and morals in the seventeenth century, see especially (with Sainte-Beuve's *Port-Royal*) the edition of *l'Abrégé* by Racine, published by M. A. Gazier, 1908, with *notes and appendices* necessary to defining and clarifying all the points,



PORTRAIT OF PASCAL

*From a print by Gérard Edelinck (1649-1707).*

This portrait, engraved after Pascal's death, appears to have been taken after the dead mask.



essential definitions of geometry, calling a circle a "round" and a line a "bar," progressed so fast in his study that he reached the thirty-second proposition of the first book of Euclid." It is proper, perhaps, to correct Mme Périer's account with that of Tallemant des Réaux (*Historiettes*, 188-189), in which young Pascal admitted to his father that he had secretly read the six first books of Euclid (1). In any event, and whether Blaise had at twelve years of age invented or only rediscovered geometry, he was endowed with true genius for science. At sixteen he composed a *Traité des sections coniques*, which is supposed to have excited the jealousy of Descartes. He took part in scientific conferences. He invented the "*machine arithmétique*," for simplifying the calculations of his father, then *intendant* at Rouen. In short, he had begun the career of a savant, fully conscious of his own worth, when an incident occurred, which gave a new direction to his life.

In 1646, Etienne Pascal broke his hip in a serious fall on the ice at Rouen. Two neighbouring noblemen, MM. de la Bouteillerie and Deslandes, who practised surgery for charity, tended him, living in his house for three months. Now, these two noblemen had been converted to Jansenism by a certain Doctor Guillebert, curé of Rouville and friend to Saint-Cyran. Blaise Pascal, his two sisters and their father, were from that time converted to Jansenism; and having always been fervent Christians, they became still more austere. This is what has been called, but not correctly, the "first conversion" of Pascal. We have testimony concerning it in the *Prière à Dieu pour le bon usage des maladies* (1648), and in the letter to M. and Mme Périer *Sur la mort de M. Pascal le père* (1651). However, in 1648, Pascal had made experiments in connection with the weight of the air, on top of the Puy-de-Dôme, in Auvergne, and at Paris on the Tower of Saint-Jacques. In 1651, he wrote a *Traité sur le vide*, only a fragment of which remains, entitled: *De l'autorité en matière de philosophie*.—His precarious health compelled him to cease his scientific labours in 1652; and then followed, for two years, what has been called the "worldly period" of Pascal's life. He frequented society, and was intimate with the Duke de Roannez and the Chevalier de Méré. Through them he became acquainted with the free-thinkers, then called "*libertins*;" and, perhaps, it was in hearing their arguments against religion, in studying their special state of mind, refractory to all traditional apologetics, that Pascal conceived the plan of his *Pensées* (2).

(1) Cf. BRUNSCHVIGG, *Opuscules et pensées de Pascal* (Paris, Hachette), p. 6; and F. STROWSKI, *Pascal et son temps*, t. II, p. 10.

(2) We cannot too positively guard against a false interpretation of the sentiments and conduct of Pascal during this worldly period. Though it was at this date, 1652-1653, that he wrote *Le Discours sur les passions de l'amour*, it is nearly certain that Pascal only spoke of the passions as a moralist and theorist, and that he never ceased to be a Christian in the strictest sense of the word. If he yielded, then, to a sort of free-thinking, it was only in the enthusiasm of science I should say, through a certain pride of the savant who knows himself to be admired, and who deals both with the most abstract and most practical questions. At the same time, we are surprised to see Pascal so miserly and so severe towards his sister Jacqueline, who wished to retire to



To what should we attribute his "second conversion," that is to say, his definite return to the most fervent Jansenism? Pascal was passing, in a coach drawn by four horses, over the bridge at Neuilly, November 8, 1654, when an accident occurred: two

of the horses were thrown into the water, and had, the reins not broken Pascal and his friends followed them.

This fact, proved by an authentic narrative, is certain. But was it followed by the moral consequences attributed to it? and should we not rather see, in this

second conversion, the slow and sure action of a Jansenist faith always alive, and above all the influence of Jacqueline?

Such is the opinion of M. Gazier, and also that of M. F. Strowski whose authority in these matters is incontestable; and such also is the

opinion of M. L. Brunshvieg. At any rate, on the 23rd of November, 1654, Pascal experienc-

ed, during meditation, a sort of ecstasy. He had noted its phases on

a piece of parchment which he always carried

sewed into the lining of his coat, and which was found after his death. Having chosen M. Singlin for his spiritual director, he first retired to Port-Royal-des-Champs, then to Port-Royal in Paris. In 1655 he wrote his *Entretien avec M. de Sacy, sur Epictète et Montaigne*.



THE HOUSE WHERE PASCAL DIED

This house, now destroyed, was situated in Neuve-Saint-Etienne Street, and belonged to Pascal's brother-in-law, Mr. Pèrier.

Port-Royal, and whose projects he opposed. (See A. GAZIER, *Mélanges de littérature et d'histoire Colin*), and F. STROWSKI, t. II, p. 224.

It was in the month of January, 1656, that Pascal was called to serve the cause of Port-Royal by defending Arnauld before public opinion against the censorship of the Sorbonne. He then published his eighteen *Provinciales* (1).

Beginning with the year 1658, Pascal occupied himself solely in the collection of material for an apology for the Christian religion, the general design of which is found in *L'Entretien avec M. de Sacy*. Pascal, constantly the prey of physical suffering, noted, or dictated a few "thoughts" relating to his work. At the same time, his powerful brain constantly led him, in spite of himself, to scientific questions and practical inventions (2). But his last years were passed in slow and dreadful agony. He died on August 19, 1662, in the house of his brother-in-law, M. Périer, and was buried at Saint-Etienne-du-Mont (3).

**Les Provinciales** (1656-1657). — We have recalled the circumstances which led to the writing of these eighteen brochures which contemporary critics have called *Les Petites Lettres*. The name *Provinciales* was first attached to them from the title the printer had given to the first: *Lettre écrite à un provincial par un de ses amis...* and afterwards from the general title which had been given to the Cologne edition in 1657: *Lettres de Louis de Montalte à un provincial-des ses amis et aux RR. PP. Jésuites sur la morale et sur la politique de ces Pères* (4). A Latin translation was published in 1658 by Nicôle (under the pseudonym of Wendrock), Latin being at that time a sort of international language for theologians and savants everywhere.

Without further reference to the subjects of grace and casuistry, let us run over briefly the subject of the principal letters, numbers 1, 2, 3, 17 and 18 of which are devoted to theology, while numbers 4 to 16 treat more especially of morals. — In the *première provinciale*, Pascal passes rapidly over the question of fact, and comes to the definition of efficacious grace and of proximate power. In the second, he studies sufficing grace. The third is a discussion in favour of Arnauld, who had just been censured by the Sorbonne. — In the fourth, we enter the domain of morals, and the Jesuits begin to be directly attacked: Pascal wishes to destroy the doctrine that "A moral act cannot be considered a sin unless God has given us, before we have committed it, the consciousness that it is evil." If this is admitted, Pascal said, "Those who never think of God are never guilty." — In the fifth, the prosecutor's speech against the casuists; an examination of the doctrine of probability (in a case of doubt, it is enough to have the authority of one doctor to render your opinion probable, that is to say, worthy of approval). — The sixth shows us the details of these probabilities and their consequences (for priests, nuns, servants). — The seventh, very important, is devoted to the direction of

(1) He had begun a nineteenth and announced a twentieth, when he stopped this work, either because he thought it might end in being dangerous for religion itself, as the sequel indeed proved, or because he thought it more useful to apply himself without delay to his *Apologie*; or whether the struggle entered into by the Parisian curés against the casuists made him feel his object already attained and his role ended.

(2) The problem of the cycloid; the "carrosses à cinq sols" (*omnibus*). Cf. Mme Périer's letter cited by BRUNSCHWIG, p. 247.

(3) Read Pascal's Will (L. BRUNSCHWIG, p. 250).

(4) MONTALTE was Pascal's pseudonyme — an anagram made from his birth place, Clermont (*Mons altus*).

intention: we may, according to certain casuists, correct the vice by the purity of the object (so, homicide, in the duel).—In the eighth, the discussion of casuistry is continued “with reference to judges, usurers, bankrupts, etc.” Ninth letter: the same subject (ambition, envy, gluttony, equivocations...).—Tenth letter: Upon the sacrament of penance. The Jesuits have made “confession as easy as it was formerly difficult.” At the end of this letter, Pascal gives up his ironical tone, and the comic dialogue, to address himself thenceforth in his own person, and in a tone of the most eloquent indignation, to his adversaries.—Eleventh letter: Pascal defends himself from the charge of having gone too far in treating the errors of the casuists with raillery. On the contrary, he reproaches the Jesuits with their “impious buffoonery.”—Twelfth letter: Errors of the Jesuits concerning charity and simony.—Thirteenth letter (one of the most important): Upon Homicide.—Fourteenth letter: Continuation of the same subject.—Fifteenth letter: On Calumny.—Sixteenth letter: Calumnies of the Jesuits against some monks. From the eleventh to the sixteenth, Pascal addresses the Jesuit fathers directly; the seventeenth and eighteenth are entitled: *Au R. P. Annat, jésuite*; in this Pascal reverts to the theological question namely: Popes and Councils are not infallible on the question of fact (17th); “Everybody condemns the doctrine forced by the Jesuits into the meaning of Jansenius” (18th).

**Pascal's Art in the “Provinciales.”** — Despite the real importance of the debate about grace (for the question concerns the limits of human liberty and of Divine power), despite the universal significance of discussions concerning severe or relaxed morals, *Les Provinciales* would long ago have been added to the enormous heap of pamphlets of all sorts which do not survive their time, had Pascal not appeared in them as a writer of genius. Voltaire said in his *Siècle de Louis XIV*, “Molière's best comedies are not more spicy than the first *Provinciales*; Bossuet never wrote anything more sublime than the last.” It is enough to develop this judgment by indicating some of Pascal's methods:

1° Pascal's intention in his first letters—and in this he reacted against the dull style of Arnauld—was to reach the social world, to interest it, and oblige it to understand—or to think that it understood—the subject of the disputes of the Sorbonne. He presents himself as man of the world very ignorant in these affairs and desiring to learn; and he addresses himself, with naïveté, to doctors and Jesuits.—Thus, in the first *Provinciale*, he questions a Doctor of Navarre, whose answers are nothing but words; then he goes to a Jansenist, returns again to his doctor, and questions a Jacobin. Each of these characters has his own physiognomy, his particular kind of infatuation, and style. The Jacobin reappears in the second letter, with his scholastic and “*sorbonique*” self-sufficiency, thrown into relief by the ironical naïveté of his interlocutor. But the Jesuit father in the fourth letter is a more finished figure; it is he who, to enlighten Pascal as to the real definition of *grâce actuelle*, goes “to find some books:” namely the *Somme* by Father Bauny, a *factum* by Father Annat; the writings of M. Le Moine; and Pascal presses him, and compels him to break down his own position by quotation after quotation... Finally, the Jesuit is completely bowled over. Fortunately “They come to announce to him that he is wanted by Mme la maréchale de..... and Mme la marquise de.....; so, he

leaves in haste, saying "I will speak of it to our Fathers. They will soon find some answer. We have some very subtle ones here." The comedy is as complete as in a Platonic dialogue.—But there is a still better Jesuit, more comical and more natural, who appears in the fifth letter, and plays his part until the end of the ninth. Pascal's method, in trying the case of the casuists' morality, was to let them speak for themselves in the person of this good Father who defends his opinions and those of his companions with a serenity as laughable as it is disquieting.—Sincere as Pascal was in his polemics, it may be admitted that he often exaggerated the meaning of the texts he quotes, implying all the errors that might be drawn from them. But his legal skill equalled his management of the dialogue. In short, we must say of these first letters, with Racine: "Does it not seem to you that *Les Provinciales* are pure comedy?"

2° After the end of the ninth letter, Pascal perhaps felt that the public, who had been very much amused by the comedy with the good Father, would begin to tire of it; and without waiting to be reproached with trying to be clever, he changed his tone and addressed himself to the Jesuits themselves. The indignation he had difficulty to control, and which betrayed itself here and there by exclamations and astonishment which only his interlocutor failed to comprehend, finally broke out in the tenth letter. The moment when he should cease to banter has been anxiously awaited, and the reader feels a sort of emotion when he transforms himself into an accuser, and with that impassioned logic which is the soul of great eloquence, harrasses and confounds the casuists. The finest letters in this connection are the thirteenth and sixteenth. In them we feel the profound conviction of a wounded and scandalised soul, which has long controlled itself and now breaks all bounds. We may say with Voltaire: "Every kind of eloquence is to be found there (1)."

**Les Pensées. — The Manuscript.** — After Pascal's death, his heirs found among his papers bundles of notes prepared for an apology for Christianity. These notes, almost illegible, were pasted in a ledger, and Etienne Périer, his nephew, had two copies made by secretaries familiar with Pascal's handwriting. The MS. and the copies are still in existence, and are preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, at Paris (2).

**First Edition (1670).** — The friends and relatives of Pascal resolved to publish these fragments (3). Although the Preface, written by Etienne Périer, proves that Pascal's probable plan was known to them, the first editors did not trouble themselves to establish any definite order among these fragments. They entitled their edition: *Pensées de M. Pascal sur la religion et sur quelques autres su-*

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 391.

(2) As to the condition of the MS., cf. L. BRUNSCHVIG, p. 266.

(3) A kind of committee was charged with the examination of the papers and the preparation of the book; it comprised: Arnauld, Nicole, de Tréville, du Bois, de la Chaise, Father Brienne of the Oratory and Etienne Périer (cf. SAINTE-BEUVE, *Port-Royal*).





*jets, qui ont été trouvées après sa mort parmi ses papiers.* At the beginning are placed the thoughts against atheists, those on Moses, on Jesus-Christ, on the Jews... Then follow Grandeur, Vanity, Weakness and the Misery of Man. Finally come Moral Thoughts, Various Thoughts, etc. It was the exact opposite of the plan outlined by Périer; but we may well believe that Pascal's friends knew what they were about. Also, they found themselves obliged to attenuate the too Jansenist meaning of certain fragments, inasmuch as, the peace of the Church seeming to have reconciled the different parties since 1668, it was necessary to be prudent. Finally, the first editors had to complete certain sentences, to modify a few others, with respect to the taste of contemporary readers. All these changes were based on reason, and made with respect and restraint (1). But it was not the "*Tout Pascal, et rien que Pascal*," which Cousin asked for in 1842. Such as it was, however, this first edition of *Les Pensées* had the greatest success: the fifth (1687) being augmented by *La Vie de Pascal*, written by Mme Périer, his sister.

**Eighteenth Century Editions.** — In the eighteenth century Pascal's fame underwent a crisis. Voltaire added to his *Lettres philosophiques* (or *Lettres anglaises*, 1734), some *Remarques sur certaines pensées de M. Pascal*. These remarks, developed, formed later on the commentary which accompanied the edition published in 1776 by Condorcet. "In this edition," said M. L. Brunschvicg, "it is a philosopher, the most intrepid apostle of optimistic rationalism, who presents Pascal to the public; he commends and he refutes him, and, what is worse, he pities him as a victim of superstition; faith has, if not destroyed, at least diminished Pascal's genius, and the editor reprimands his author in a cutting tone, as a savant, sure of himself, might do to a child who doubts and weeps." For the reprint of this edition, in 1778, Voltaire sharpened still further the meaning of his commentary.—Opposed to Condorcet's edition was that of Abbé Bossut, in 1779, which remained, until Cousin's report, the best and most equitable.

**Nineteenth Century Editions.** — Victor Cousin, a student of the seventeenth century, and who has left a fine study of Jacqueline Pascal, read before the French Academy in 1842 a report entitled: *De la Nécessité d'une nouvelle édition des Pensées de Pascal*. He pointed out, and vehemently and justly, the singular proceeding of the editors who only forgot one thing, namely, to consult the original manuscript of *Les Pensées*. Now, this MS. was in existence, and its reading revealed a quite new Pascal, almost unknown, in subject as well as form.—Cousin's eloquent appeal was heard. In 1844, Prosper Faugère published an edition of Pascal from the MS., and all the other editions are taken from that. A few of them (among others, that of M. A. Molinier, 1877) have again

(1) M. A. Gazier published a reprint of this edition of 1670 (Leccène and Oudin, 1908).

ameliorated the text (1).—On the other hand, M. E. Havet published in 1881 an edition with a remarkable commentary. Among the editions which followed, Brunschvicg's should especially be noted.

**The Plan of The "Pensées."** — If most of the editors have been satisfied even while ameliorating the text, to reproduce either the Port-Royal edition or that of Bossut, others have sought to discover and reconstitute the plan of the *Apologie*, such as M. Frantin in 1835, and more recently MM. Molinier, Astié, Rocher and Brunschvicg. They base this reconstitution upon the *Entretien de Pascal avec M. de Sacy*, and the *Préface* by Etienne Périer. But we must take into account two essential elements, namely, that Pascal was a savant and a Jansenist. Let us sum up briefly this very complex question :

1° Who were the readers for whom Pascal intended his "Apologie"? They were, without doubt, the *free-thinkers* who refused to enter into any theological or dogmatic discussion, but were always ready, with Montaigne, to rail at those who thought themselves in possession of the truth; as for themselves, they were proud of obeying only reason.

2° This explains, in Pascal's work, his search for a scientific and philosophical basis upon which the free-thinkers might be willing to accept the debate. It explains also all those fragments (written for himself, and which had never appeared in his book), about the difficulty with regard to *order*, the difference between the *spirit of finesse* and the *spirit of geometry*, and about those "reasons known to the heart which the reason itself does not know." It explains, too, those *desperate* arguments which were added as a conclusion, such as the rule of the *pari*.

3° Pascal intended, doubtless, to begin his *Apologie* by a psychological and scientific analysis of human nature; and to put his reader at ease, he would have made it, by means of Montaigne, the bedside book of the free-thinkers. The free-thinker could not have failed to recognise its exactitude. But Pascal would have had the art to bring out, through a sort of scientific necessity, the idea, the *problem*, the *enigma*. Now, what is this *enigma*? Man is weak, man is miserable; he possesses neither certitude nor the means of reaching it. But in the midst of this misery, he has inklings of greatness and of unlimited aspirations. How can these contradictions be reconciled?

4° Here Pascal supposes that he will have put the problems so strongly that the free-thinker will be the first to eagerly desire a solution (2). Let us see then, says Pascal, if the philosophers can help us. All philosophies end in two types: *scepticism* (Montaigne) and *stoicism* (Epictetus). Now, Montaigne saw only the weakness of man; Epictetus only his greatness. Up to this time, the word religion has not been mentioned. But the free-thinker, tempted to carry on the

(1) MM. Michaut and Brunschvicg published a fac-simile and exact reproduction of the MS. itself.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 160.

game, consents to examine religions, if only to convict them of the same impotency as the philosophies.

5° In our inquiry into the religions of antiquity, historical order leads us to an examination of the Bible. But there, what do we find? Pascal stops, as if the first to be surprised; he perceives, at the foundation of the Christian religion, a dogma, the dogma of the fall, which, with unexpected clearness, explains the wretched condition of the fallen being, and his memories of past greatness; the dogma of the Redemption comes to make his hopes reasonable. Thus we arrive, without violence, or dogmatic reasoning, or any theological apparatus, at a religious and Christian solution, *Christian* because the Jewish religion contains the *symbol* of the law *realised* by Christianity.

6° Pascal would then have added some historical and theological proofs concerning Jesus Christ, the miracles, the Church, etc. But the Jansenist spirit would have entirely reappeared in this last part. From this fact, that redemption is a free gift from God, Pascal would have drawn the conclusion that this gift is reserved for a few. And all the discussions concerning grace would have again taken their place in the practical conclusions of the *Apologie*.

Such was Pascal's *probable* plan. It is not possible to give a *definite* place to the fragments which he left (1).

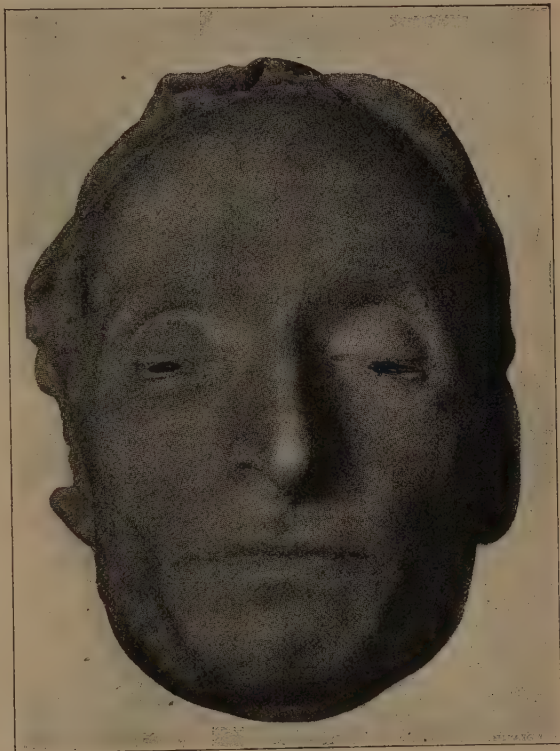
**Pascal's style.**—We have already noted above a few of the merits of style of *Les Provinciales*; but in considering the book with reference to its date, we feel more correctly its relative value. According to Voltaire, it was "the first book of genius written in [French] prose." Voltaire adds: "This work marks the epoch of the definite fixation of the language." Never, in fact, had the French vocabulary reached such a degree of fitness. No writer had passed more easily from irony to eloquence, nor had applied such natural language to every genre. Pascal was the first writer, since Calvin, to bring theological questions to *public* attention. He *secularised* a whole domain of ideas. If we pass from *Les Provinciales* to *Les Pensées*, our admiration is redoubled. In these fragments, indeed, Pascal is no longer only a pamphleteer with genius, a vehement orator, he is a poet. His marvellous imagination suggests to him images which are equal to those of the greatest French lyricists. His physical and moral sufferings left their traces on this first vigorous yet broken effort, on these scraps of arguments, and in these cries of anguish or of hope. Certainly a few will regret that Pascal's *Apologie* was never finished; but even as it is, it is a unique document of the French and Christian soul in the seventeenth century. The finished work would have had the perfection of *Les Provinciales*, but would not have revealed, at once, the most natural and most impassioned writer of the French language. An accident, a surprise was necessary to wrench from that seventeenth century, the enemy of personal literature, two masterpieces which have

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 160; 2nd cycle, p. 381.



the value of sketches by Da Vinci and Michael Angelo : the *Pensées* of Pascal and the *Sermons* of Bossuet.

**Pascal's " rhetoric ".**—This would be the place in which to sum up what has been so improperly called the *rhetoric* of Pascal (the expression is Mme Périer's). Pascal left us a certain number of *thoughts* on composition and style. This *rhetoric* or *art of persuading*, rests essentially on the distinction between the *spirit of geometry* (the deductive reasoning of the savant), and the *spirit of finesse* (the instinctive or intuitive perception of those reasons which will persuade others). The orator must divine what reasons will convince his adversary, and the *order* in which they should be presented. This *order*, so difficult to grasp, cannot be indicated by any rule; it is the mind which, in each question, creates and follows it. An unconscious slave of this order, the writer has not leisure to think of ornaments, of spurious beauties; all evident search for these betrays the *author*, and it is not the author who convinces, but the *man* (1). The



THE DEAD MASQUE OF PASCAL

It is from this masque that all the portraits of Pascal in his old age have been copied.

supreme rule, therefore, is *naturalness* but no *nature*; for *naturalness*, which varies according to the case and the persons, is only attained by profound meditation and true psychological science. These principles Pascal followed. There is no French writer who smacks less of the *author*. Each of his pages gives us the impression of an idea, a sentiment, a passion communicated directly to us.

(1) *Mor ceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 383.

And yet, we know how he worked over his style, since, according to Nicole's testimony, he had thirteen times rewritten the eighteenth *Provinciale*.

### III. — INFLUENCE OF PORT-ROYAL IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

In spite of continual persecution, Port-Royal exercised a very serious influence on writers and on society in the seventeenth century. 1° We should note the striking example of firmness and resistance given by the "Messieurs de Port-Royal" at a time when the general spirit of docility and renunciation of rights was permitting the establishment of absolute power in France, which was to continue for nearly two centuries. Though they astonish us by their obstinacy, yet these "Messieurs," when their names happen to be Saint-Cyran, Arnauld, Nicole, Pascal, and when they pay for their opinions with life and liberty, are great and worthy of admiration. It may be said that something of their moral solidity, their stoical virtue, passed into such men as Bossuet, La Rochefoucauld, Boileau or Saint-Simon.—2° Through Saint-Cyran and Singlin also, Port-Royal influenced the reform of preaching; and there was no preacher, up to Bourdaloue, a Jesuit, but was indebted to them.—3° The "Messieurs de Port-Royal" contributed to the transformation of methods and text-books. In their *petites écoles* they taught, besides Latin, French and Greek, which at that time were neither on the syllabus of the University nor the *Ratio Studiorum* of the Jesuits. Their *Logique*, their *Grammaire*, their *Jardin des racines grecques* became in the following century the official books for scholars. We should not forget, also, that they had in these schools scholars who did them credit, and that Racine owed perhaps to Lancelot and Nicole not only his knowledge of Greek but his subtle psychology.—It suffices to open any of the *Mémoires* or *Correspondances* of that time to see what place was held by Port-Royal; and this influence continued for part of the eighteenth century until the period when, with Voltaire and the *Encyclopédie*, it was overwhelmed by rationalism and optimism.

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"MADAME'S TOMB"

Frontispiece of a funeral sonnet in honour of Henrietta of England.  
*From the print of Jean Lepautre (1618-1682).*

## CHAPTER VI.

### BOSSUET AND THE PREACHERS.

#### SUMMARY

1° **PREVIOUS TO BOSSUET**, preaching was reformed by **Saint Vincent de Paul**, the **Oratory**, the **Jesuits** and **Port-Royal**.

2° **BOSSUET** (1627-1704) studied at Dijon and Paris, was archdeacon of Metz, where he lived until 1658, when he went (1699) to preach in Paris and at Court. He was appointed Bishop of Condom (1659) and tutor to the Dauphin (1670), delivered several funeral orations, and became Bishop of Meaux in 1681.—In character, he was good, honest and sensible.—His **Sermons** were not published until the end of the eighteenth century.—Bossuet had no literary pretensions; he desired only to move and convince. His eloquence is **lyrical**.—He renewed the **funeral oration** by introducing **history** and the **sermon** into it.—As a tutor, he thoroughly studied, himself, everything which he taught. He composed several works for the Dauphin, among which he wrote **le Discours sur l'histoire universelle** (1681); and after his death appeared **la Politique tirée de l'Écriture Sainte** and **le Traité de la connaissance de Dieu et de soi-même**.—Bossuet was a controversialist throughout his whole life. He published in 1688 his **Histoire des Variations des Églises protestantes**, a masterpiece of learning and style. He combated **quietism**.—As a writer Bossuet drew his inspiration above all from the Bible and the Fathers.—His style is remarkable for its **propriety** and **variety**.

3° **BOURDALOUE** (1632-1704), a Jesuit, preached ten times through Lent and Advent at Versailles; as a preacher of sermons he had more success than Bossuet. He knew how to please by his reasoning, and especially by his verbal portraits, in which the ill-nature of the court recognised certain personages.

4° **FLÉCHIER** (1632-1710) is famous for his funeral oration on Turenne; **MAS-CARON** (1634-1703) had vehemence, but his style is archaic;—**MASSILLON** (1663-1742) pronounced the funeral oration of Louis XIV, the *Petit Carême*, etc. His style is harmonious and elegant; he has been called the French Isocrates.

## I. — PREACHING BEFORE THE TIME OF BOSSUET.



DECORATED LETTER  
of the XVII century.

e have mentioned a few of the great preachers of the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century, and have said—and this should be repeated—that the *sermon* was not a “ literary genre, ” and that the best sermons, judged by their object, have never been published or perhaps even written. However, “ the art of persuading ” may have its utility even when only used to restore faith and morality to the faithful attendants at Church services. We shall see later on how Bossuet understood what might be called “ pulpit rhetoric (1). ”

After Saint François de Sales, already spoken of, should be mentioned several precursors of Bossuet : **Saint Vincent de Paul** (1576-1660), from whose work is often quoted the beautiful peroration of a sermon on charity (he knew and encouraged Bossuet, whom he called “ his son ”); and Father **Lejeune** (1592-1672) of the Oratory, a familiar preacher who, though possessing more taste, recalled those of the sixteenth century. To the same congregation belonged Father **Senault** (1599-1662), who was more accomplished and elegant, and had greater success in the social world. In a general way, the Oratory, which was founded in 1612 by Cardinal de Bérulle, contributed, through its teaching and by the distinction of its members, to reform preaching. When Bossuet, in 1662, delivered the funeral oration of Father **Bourgoing**, superior general of this order, he paid eloquent homage to the preacher, and seemed to define himself in defining his theory respecting the pulpit.

The Jesuits, on their side, included from the beginning of the seventeenth century, some very eminent preachers, among others Father **Claude de Lin-**

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, pp. 397-404.



**gendes** (1591-1660), some of whose Latin sermons we possess, which were delivered, however, in French. His was the most austere morality, and Bourdaloue frequently imitated him.

Finally, Port-Royal contributed by training preachers, and inculcating in them the true principles of sacred eloquence; in this connection **Saint-Cyran** and **Singlin** have already been cited.

## II. — BOSSUET (1627-1704).

**Biography.**— Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet belonged to an old “*Parlementaire*” family of Burgundy. His father, Bénigne Bossuet, was advocate at the *Parlement* of Dijon, and became counsellor to the *Parlement* of Metz. Jacques-Bénigne was born at Dijon on September 27, 1627, the seventh of ten children, and was early destined for the Church. He began his studies at the Jesuit college of his native town, and continued them at Paris, after 1642, at the College of Navarre (4). We do not know for a certainty that he frequented the Hôtel de Rambouillet while pursuing his theological studies, or that one evening he improvised a sermon there at one o'clock in the morning; nor can we be sure of the authenticity of Voiture's mot: “I never heard any one preach so early or so late.”—In any event, while still young, Bossuet had acquired a reputation. His ardour for work led his fellow-students to call him *Bos suetus aratro* (2); and the Prince de Condé accepted in 1648 the dedication of his first trial thesis.

Bossuet was ordained subdeacon at Langres, and deacon at Metz where his family had obtained a canonry for him in 1640. In 1650, he successfully wrote what is called the *sorbonique* thesis; in 1652, he became a Doctor of Theology. Ordained priest that same year, Bossuet went to reside at Metz, with the title of archdeacon of Sarrebourg. With the exception of a short stay in Paris (1557, *Panégérique de saint Paul*), he preached and fulfilled all the duties of a priest at Metz from 1652 until 1659. From this period we must imagine Bossuet full of apostolic ardour and without the least literary ambition. He is already a controversialist apostle, a director of consciences, and an indefatigable worker, borrowing from sleep the time to read and reread the Bible and the Fathers.—Protestants and Jews were numerous in Metz. Bossuet wrote a *Réfutation du catéchisme de Ferri*, a Calvinistic minister (1655), and converted some Jews. He already had great success as a preacher. This was the period of his *Panégériques* and his first *Oraisons funèbres*.

In 1659, he settled in Paris, but without giving up his canonry at Metz nor his title of Archdeacon—(in 1664 he was to be appointed Dean of the Chapter

(1) The principal was Nicolas Cornet, who formulated the *five propositions* of Jansenius. Bossuet pronounced his funeral oration in 1663.

(2) *Bos suetus aratro* signifies literally “the ox accustomed to the cart”.

of Metz). He preached two panegyrics (*Saint Joseph* and *Saint Theresa*) before the queen-mother; and in 1660 he began the series of Lents and Advents which we shall enumerate later.

From 1659 to 1669, Bossuet multiplied his output: sermons, panegyrics, funeral orations, conversion of illustrious protestants (Mlle de Bouillon, Turenne, de Lorges, etc.), controversies and conferences with the minister Ferri, and incessant labour of which we have evidence in the exact *documentation* of all his works. But he had published nothing since 1635.

In 1669, Bossuet was appointed Bishop of Condom, and the following year tutor to the Dauphin. In 1671, he was elected a member of the French Academy, resigned the Condom Bishopric, and received in compensation two Priors in the dioceses of Bayeux and Beauvais. Absorbed by his tutorship to the Dauphin, for which he imposed upon himself a labour as crushing as it was useless, he preached but rarely between 1669 and 1680. He preached, in 1669, the funeral oration for *Henriette de France*, and, in 1670, that for *Henriette d'Angleterre*. But he did not abandon controversy; and in 1678 he held conferences with the famous minister Claude in the presence of Mlle Duras, a Protestant, and she was converted to Catholicism. In the same year he caused the condemnation of Richard Simon's *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament*.

When the term of his tutorship was ended, Bossuet was appointed First Chaplain to the Dauphiness, and Bishop of Meaux (1681). It may be said that his life now became more active than ever. On one hand, he was occupied in finishing and publishing several works undertaken for the Dauphin; on the other, with administering his diocese, in which he resided, with as much punctuality as apostolic zeal; finally, and particularly, he became the jealous defender of Catholic and Gallican orthodoxy against all those who, from without as well as within, attempted to change tradition. In 1681, he delivered the opening sermon to the Assembly of the Clergy of France, upon *l'Unité de l'Église*, and this was the only one of his sermons which he printed, considering it as a manifesto. He wrote in 1682 the *Déclaration du clergé de France en quatre articles, sur les libertés de l'Église gallicane*. He published his *Histoire des variations des Églises protestantes* (1688), and his six *Avertissements aux protestants* (1689-1691); and negotiated with Van Meulen and Leibnitz for the reunion of Protestant Churches. He issued his *Maximes sur la comédie* in 1694, against Father Caffaro; and meanwhile pronounced five funeral orations between 1680 and 1687. Then began the affair concerning Quietism, which commenced in 1694 and did not end until 1699. In this affair Bossuet produced an incredible number of *mémoires*, relations and responses, all of which indicated a profound study of the texts. Add to all this a great number of letters to persons of every class and kind, and especially some admirable spiritual letters.

Still Bossuet found time to appear at Versailles and Chantilly, to inspect the convents of his diocese, and to preach retreats there.



PORTRAIT OF BOSSUET, BISHOP OF CONDOM  
From the print by Robert Nanteuil (1623-1678).

He died on April 12, 1704, *les armes à la main*, to use Saint-Simon's expression.

**His Character**—A few sublime and pompous passages everlastingly quoted from his *funeral orations*; a theatrical portrait painted by Rigaud; recollections of the violent quarrel about Quietism, in which some have regarded Fénelon as a victim, have contributed to deceive public opinion regarding the true character of Bossuet. His dominant trait was kindness. His contemporaries have insisted upon his gentleness and winsomeness. He only became vehement and insistent when he constituted himself the defender of tradition and faith against innovators whom he considered dangerous, and after exhausting all means of conciliation. From Metz to Meaux we find him engaged in courteous discussions with illustrious protestants; and against Fénelon he at first only tried expostulations. Another trait of his character was his conscientiousness in everything he did. Endowed with a wonderful capacity for work, he devoted much of his time to searching and classifying documents. Never did this marvellous orator rely on words alone.—He was frank with everyone, even the king. If we place in their correct date the compliments he paid Louis XIV, we find they really were *lessons*. Read especially his letters to the king in 1675 (4).—He was spontaneous and vigorous; as writer and moralist he was essentially healthy and right-minded, free from every kind of excess. His *spiritual letters* are still timely.—Finally, that quality of Bossuet's which sums up and explains all the others, was common sense. In people of a cold and limited nature, common sense is synonymous with mediocrity; but in a man endowed with the most powerful imagination, an exquisite sensibility, and strong reasoning power, common sense means equilibrium and *humanity*.

**Bossuet as Sermonist.**—Bossuet's career as a preacher divides into several periods:

1° *At Metz* (1652-1658). We may note during this period: the sermon on *La Loi de Dieu* (1653 or 1656), the panegyric of *Saint Bernard* (1655) (2), the first sermon on *La Providence* (1656), the Panegyric of *Saint Theresa* (1657), that of *Saint Paul* (1657, at Paris, General Hospital) (3). Bossuet's youthful discourses are remarkable for ardour and vehemence, and for a Biblical boldness and picturesqueness. His models were then Tertullian and Saint Augustine.

2° *At Paris* (1658-1670). This is the epoch of the *Lenten and Advent series*: Lent of 1660, at the Minimes of the *Place Royale* (now the *Place des Vosges*, at that time the centre of Parisian elegance). This was a *Petit Carême*, that is to say, included only sermons delivered on Sunday, whereas "Grand Carême"

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 417.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 173.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 397.



included preaching also on Wednesday and Friday (1). The following sermons of this series should be mentioned: on *Les Démon*s, on *L'Honneur du Monde* (2), on *Les Vaines Excuses des Pécheurs*, on *La Passion* (3). From this time, the influence of Saint John Chrysostom modified that of Tertullian and Saint Augustine.—Lent of 1661 was preached to the Carmelites in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques (now the Military Hospital of the Val-de-Grâce): and included sermons on *La Parole de Dieu*, on *La Haine de la Vérité*, on *Les Souffrances*, on *La Passion*. Abbé Leduc tells us that Bossuet had among his auditors there the "Messieurs de Port-Royal" (4).—Lent of 1662, at the Louvre, with sermons on *La Prédication évangélique*, *L'Impénitence finale* (5), *La Providence* (second), on *L'Ambition* (6), on *La Mort*, on *Les Devoirs des rois*, on *La Passion*.—Lent of 1665, at Saint-Thomas du Louvre—(this was no longer Lent at court, but Lent before the court).—Advent of the Louvre, 1665.—Lent of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 1666, including sermons on *La Divinité de la Religion*, on *L'Honneur*, on *L'Amour des Plaisirs*, on *La Justice*, on *L'Ambition* (second).—Advent of Saint-Thomas du Louvre, 1668.—Advent of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 1669, with sermons on *Les Conditions nécessaires pour être heureux*, on *L'Endurcissement*.—This was Bossuet's fully matured period.

3<sup>o</sup> During his tutorship, Bossuet gave up preaching. We should note, however, in 1675, his sermon *Pour la profession de Mademoiselle de la Vallière*.

4 After his appointment as Bishop of Meaux, Bossuet began to preach again, sometimes on solemn occasions (as the sermon on *L'Unité de l'Église*, 1681), sometimes in the cathedral at Meaux (*Pour le jour de Pâques* (1685) (7), and the churches and convents of his dioceses (including his sermon on *Le Silence* at the house of the Ursulines). This was the period of Bossuet's more familiar eloquence, of the homily rather than the sermon (8).

**Bossuet's Sermons. Manuscripts. Editions.**—Bossuet himself did not publish his sermons. One only, his sermon on *L'Unité de l'Église*, was printed with the title *Manifeste officiel* (1681); another, on *La Profession de Mademoiselle de la Vallière*, was printed without his knowledge. Nothing could prove more clearly Bossuet's disdain of literary glory than the condition in which he left

(1) We may note the naiveté of those who have thought that the famous *Petit Carême* of Massillon was so called because it was preached in the presence of the child Louis XV.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 175.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 404.

(4) Several similar expressions in Bossuet's *Sermons* and Pascal's *Pensées* have given rise to the belief, among some critics, that Pascal had imitated Bossuet, or vice versa. The question is trifling, and M. Gandar (*Bossuet orateur*) has settled it in one word: both writers derived inspiration from the Scriptures and the Fathers, that is all.

(5) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 407.

(6) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 177.

(7) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 409.

(8) In this list are cited sermons which may be found in the classical collections of MM. Gandar, Gazier, Rébelliau, Jaquinet and Calvet.

the MSS. of his sermons, especially when we think that anybody else would have profited by his residence at Meaux to re-read, finish and have printed the discourses which had made him celebrated at Metz and at Paris. In many excellent preachers—though of a narrower spirit than Bossuet—appears, after a brilliant oratorical career, a dangerous sophism: they persuade themselves that by publishing their sermons they will not only edify their readers but make conversions! Bossuet's common sense, which was one of the elements of his genius, saved him from this reasoning. He knew that in the sermon, more than in any other oratorical genre, the chief quality must be suitableness, the adaptation of the arguments to the congregation. He felt this so strongly that, when he wrote down a sermon, it was not to learn it by heart and recite it, but only to be sure himself of his general plan, his quotations and examples, and that the moment he preached it from the pulpit, he adapted his arguments to the sympathy or resistance of his hearers. And when he delivered a sermon for the second time, he had no literary respect for these rapidly written pages; he resumed them as being material which, as a whole, could be used again, but he modified, shortened, developped, drawing his pitiless pen through magnificent images and perfect bravuras, and especially adapting the reasoning and proofs, the sentiments and the pathos to his present auditory. It is easy to study his method in the sermons he delivered at different dates: for instance, the sermon on *La Providence* of 1656 and that of 1662, and especially the sermon on *L'Ambition* which he preached three times—to the Carmelites in 1661, at the Louvre in 1662 and at Saint-Germain in 1666 (1). Bossuet also left some portfolios full of sermons in MS., arranged in liturgical order and evidently frequently revised, but none of which was ready for the printer. These portfolios passed into the possession of the son of his brother Antoine, Abbé Bossuet, who became Bishop of Troyes. He thought he could use them as his uncle had done; he preached them, and permitted the priests of his diocese to copy them and even to carry them to their houses. His heirs, M. and Madame de Chazot, of Metz, were equally ready to communicate Bossuet's manuscripts.—Meanwhile, the *Bénédictins des Blancs-Manteaux*, at Paris, prepared an edition of the *Œuvres complètes de Bossuet* (begun by Abbé Lequeux), and Dom Déforis appealed to everybody who possessed Bossuets' MSS. He obtained from Mme de Chazot what remained of the sermons, and the edition of 1772-1778 includes four volumes composed of fragments discovered in this manner, and more or less successfully reconstituted. Since the Benedictines' edition a few more sermons have been found, but we have only about two hundred altogether.

Dom Déforis had had the honesty and wisdom—very great at that epoch—to publish all of Bossuet's work. Though a few faults and errors may be found

(1) Cf. Abbé LEBARQ'S, *Bossuet, Sermons sur l'Ambition*, critical edition, Paris, 1890; Ch.-M. DES GRANGE'S, *Sermon sur l'Ambition*, critical study, Paris, 1890.

in his edition, yet he resisted, in spite of the tendency of his time, those who wished him to "select and revise." But he dated the sermons wrong, he failed to separate the strata made by rewritings at various dates, he often misread the text and unskilfully chose readings. In short, after Dom Déforis, the editions of Abbé Vailant (1851), of Floquet (1855-1864), of Lachal (1862-1865), of Gandar, of M. Gazier and of Abbé Lebarq were necessary to establish a definitive text and a rational classification of Bossuet's sermons (1).

As soon as the edition of 1772-1778 had appeared, the judgments of critics and of the clergy proved to what extent true genius is misunderstood in periods of literary and moral decadence. Abbé Maury, without doubt, showed some enthusiasm, and d'Alembert in 1779 pronounced the sermons to be *esquisses de maître*. But La Harpe declared that Bossuet was *mediocre in his sermons*; Féletz considered him *too familiar, laboured, obscure, diffuse, low and trivial*. A reaction soon followed, and Saint-Marc Girardin, Patin, Nisard and the critics we have mentioned above, gave his sermons the first place in Bossuet's work.



A SERMON IN THE XVII CENTURY  
From the print by Jean Lepautre (1648-1682).

**How Bossuet understood Pulpit Eloquence (2).** — We have already seen,

(1) Cf. Abbé LEBARQ'S, *La Prédication de Bossuet*, 1888, and *Œuvres oratoires de Bossuet*, Paris, 1890-1896, 6 vol.

(2) The sources for this study are : the *Panegyrique de saint Paul*, l'*Oraison funèbre du Père*

by the manner in which Bossuet wrote and rehandled his sermons, that he had nothing in him of the professional literary man, and was solely preoccupied with the task of convincing and moving. But he had occasion to say explicitly how he understood Christian eloquence.

Bossuet wished, first of all, that the preacher should know the Holy Scriptures. He, himself, read and re-read the Bible until he was so penetrated by it that we no longer see the welding of his Biblical quotation with his own commentary (cf., on this subject, *L'Honneur du monde*, *L'Ambition*, *L'Honneur*, *L'Impénitence finale*, etc.). For the Fathers he recommends the simultaneous reading of Saint Augustine and Saint John Chrysostom, who complete and correct each other; Tertullian (for whom, as a young priest at Metz, he felt genuine enthusiasm), Saint Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria, Saint Gregory of Nazianz. Among profane Greek authors: Homer, Plato, Socrates, Demosthenes—though Bossuet admits that he has not read them extensively); in Latin: Cicero, Livy, Sallust, Terence, Virgil; in French: Balzac, the writings of the Messieurs of Port-Royal, and Corneille.—At the time when Bossuet sent this list to Cardinal de Bouillon, he had not yet completed the education of the Dauphin; and later he undertook a profound study of profane authors.—“But what is most necessary in order to form style, is to understand well, to penetrate everything to its foundation and its end, and to know it thoroughly...”

In the *Panegyrique de Saint Paul* and in *La Parole de Dieu*, Bossuet inveighs with evangelical vehemence against the literary pretensions of the Christian orator, and the blameworthy curiosity of his auditors. “Saint Paul,” he said, “rejects all the artifices of rhetoric... He has means for persuading which Greece did not teach and Rome had not learned... a more than human virtue which persuades in spite of rules, which does not flatter the ear, but carries straight to the heart... Let us not regard preaching as a mental diversion; let us not demand rhetorical ornament of preachers, but the doctrines of Scripture... At least, let us know how to distinguish the seasoning from the solid nourishment... (1)” —In his *Parole de Dieu*, Bossuet compares the altar with the pulpit. He deems equally guilty the priest who lets fall the wafer, or the listener who lets fall the word of Jesus-Christ. “Preachers do not enter the pulpit to make vain discourses which must be listened to for diversion. (They enter them) in the same spirit as they approach the altar, to celebrate a mystery... Conscience desires the truth, and as it is to the conscience that preachers speak, they ought not to seek brilliancy to enliven, nor harmony to do, light, nor emotions to please, but lightning to pierce, and thunder to rouse-

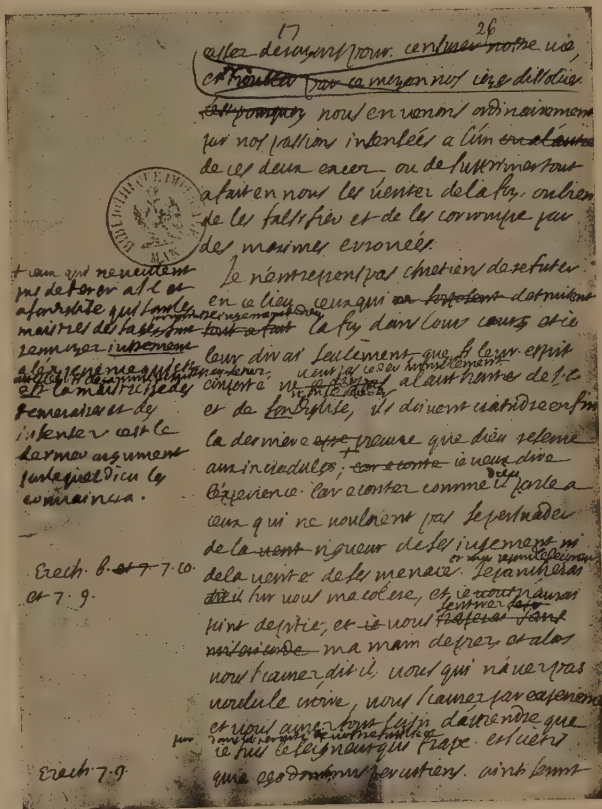
*Bourgoing*, the Sermons on *La Prédication* and *La Parole de Dieu*, and a tract published by Floquet in 1855 under the title: *Sur le style et la lecture des écrivains et des Pères de l'Église pour former un orateur*, written in 1669 for young Cardinal de Bouillon (*Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 401). To these should be added many passages from other sermons, funeral orations, letters, etc. Cf. J. CALVET, *Bossuet* (Hatier), p. 259.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 397 (passage commenté).



The preacher will take everything from the Scriptures, not only to justify but also to embellish his discourse."—On their side, the listeners should "know how to listen within... The sermon is spoken in the pulpit, but the preaching is done from the heart.—They weigh words, compare preachers, as if the pulpit were a theatre in which preachers contested the prize for good oratory."

as correct as it was strong; but he did not fear, when the subject required it, to descend to familiarity and surprise his hearers by the *brusquerie* and violence of his language. In the *Oraison funèbre d'Anne de Gonzague*, after having recounted the dreams of the princess, and quoted from her letters, he said : " It gives me pleasure to repeat these words, in spite of the sensitiveness of some ears; they nullify the most elevated discourses, and I should wish always



COPIED FROM AN AUTOGRAPHIC PAGE OF THE SERMONS OF BOSSUET

to speak this language!" And again: "My discourse, of which you think yourselves the judges, will judge you in the end; and if it does not leave you better Christians, you will be all the more guilty."

**Bossuet's Lyricism.**—What explains still further a certain resistance to Bossuet in the seventeenth century, is the fact that he was much less impersonal and abstract than a Bourdaloue or a Massillon. Alone with Pascal in his century he was a *lyricist*.—Abbé Maury had already pointed out the lyricism of Bossuet; Villemain defined and specified it in the *Introduction to the Poésie de Pindare*; and in our time Brunetière returned with his usual brilliance to this subject.

What is *lyricism*, in itself? "It is the impassioned and figurative expression of individual emotions upon common themes." Thus defined, it may be a part of any genre, and may even become its soul.—In the seventeenth century, when everyone "loved reason," when, influenced by Cartesianism, everybody wished "to arrange his thoughts in order" (so much so, that Boileau thought the *fine disorder* of the ode an *effect of art*), all the then definitive genres avoided lyricism. One genre only—if it may be so called—escaped this common rule, by its liberty and the very large part left to its individual author, namely, the sermon. Furthermore, eloquence has always been allied to lyricism, especially when, instead of questions of right or of persons, it treats of the great *common ground* on which all humanity lives, and when the orator seeks to arouse the imagination and sensibility of his hearers.

On another hand, let us note all the sources of lyricism in Bossuet:—First, in himself, a vivid and powerful imagination, an apostolic ardour, an authority founded on tradition, which gave him the tone of the prophets; a profound knowledge, through his spiritual direction of others in the confessional, of the intimate drama played in every man's heart; finally, his method of work, which consisted in meditating at great length, and then writing rapidly under the inspiration which oppressed him.—Then, outside of himself, so to speak, the need for rejuvenating the ideas which form the substance of sermons; a constant study of the Bible as the inexhaustible source of the most beautiful lyricism,—a lyricism which, from God to man, "remplit tout l'entre-deux;" and finally the reading of the Fathers, especially Tertullian, Saint Augustine, Saint John Chrysostom, the first ardent defenders of a young and feeling faith.

The lyricism of the sermons may be classified thus:—a) *General movement of the discourse*: Bossuet obeyed an interior emotion which carried forward and gave rhythm to his reasoning. He was not a cold, but an *impassioned logician*, like Pascal (*La Mort, l'Impénitence finale, L'Enfant Prodigue*, the different *Pas-sions*).—b) The tone is personal and often imperious, like that of a visionary who, receiving inspiration from on high, suffering from it, in a way, projects it in his turn upon his hearers (*L'Ambition, La Mort, L'Honneur, Saint Bernard*).

—c) He often spoke after a kind of meditation which was both psychological and mystical, and then he resembles the modern French lyricists such as Lamartine, Vigny, or Sully Prudhomme. He continues to the point of ecstasy, and loses himself in grief or adoration (*Saint-Bernard, Sainte-Thérèse, L'Honneur, La Mort, La Passion de 1660*).—d) He gives rhythmic form to his dissertations, with impressive refrains: see especially *L'Impénitence finale*, « La fin est venue, la fin est venue... » etc. the *Passion of 1660, Tradebat autem*, and the sermon for Easter Day, 1685: « Marche! marche! »

But this lyricism does not deprive Bossuet of a complete possession of his thought and of the sequence of his reasoning. We feel that in him reason is sovereign and regulates this lyrical ardour: and it is this vibration of a powerful sensibility disciplined by genius that makes the reading of his sermons as vital as that of the *Pensées* of Pascal.

**The Funeral Orations.** — The word *oraison* was still used in the seventeenth century to mean *discourse*; they said the *oraisons de Cicéron*. No religious sense, therefore, must be read into this expression, now archaic.

Bossuet's funeral orations are: 1656, at Metz, *Yolande de Monterby*, Abbess of Sainte-Marie of Metz; in 1658, at Metz, *Henri de Gornay*;—in 1662, *Father Bourgoing*, superior-general of the Oratory;—in 1663, *Nicolas Cornet*, principal of the College of Navarre;—in 1667, *Anne d'Autriche* (this discourse is lost);—in 1669, *Henriette de France*, Queen of England;—in 1670, *Henriette d'Angleterre*, duchess d'Orléans;—in 1683, *Marie-Thérèse*, Queen of France;—in 1685, *Anne de Gonzague*, princess palatine;—in 1686, *Michel Le Tellier*, Chancellor of France;—in 1686, *Mme du Blé d'Uxelles*, Abbess of Faremoutiers (discourse lost);—in 1687, the *Prince de Condé*.—Of these twelve orations, six were printed during Bossuet's lifetime by order of the king.

**Analysis of the principal Funeral Orations.** — *Henriette de France, Queen of England* (November 15, 1669, "in the presence of Monsieur, brother of the King, and of Madame, in the church of the religious of Sainte-Marie de Chaillot, where the heart of His Majesty reposes").

*Text*: *Et nunc, reges, intelligite; erudimini, qui judicatis terram* (Psalm XI). "Now, kings, learn; instruct yourselves, judges of the earth."

*Exordium*: God, sovereign master of kings, knows how to give them, when it so pleases Him, great and terrible lessons. Example is found in Henriette, in whose life alone occurred all the extreme trials of human experience.

*Division*: Henriette knew how to make use of good and evil fortune in a Christian manner.

*First part*: Prosperity.—The family of Henriette; the English family.—Her qualities: "Her heart was even more noble than her birth." Her role in England.

*Second part*: Misfortunes.—The rebellions in England. From what causes? Portrait of Charles I. The religious sects. Portrait of Cromwell.—How the queen endured these trials.—She sees her family reestablished on the English throne.

*Peroration*: She thanks God for "having made her an unfortunate queen", and dies in a pious retreat

**II.—Henriette d'Angleterre, Duchess d'Orléans** (August 21, 1670, at Saint-Denis, in the presence of the Great Condé).

*Text* : *Vanitas vanitatum, et omnia vanitas* (Ecclesiastes, I, 2). "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity."

*Exordium* : Everything in man is vanity, if we consider what he gives to the world; everything, on the contrary, is precious and important, if we consider what he owes to God.

*Division* : Let us see what a sudden death has ravished from her; let us see what a holy death has given her.

*First part* : Greatness of her birth.—Her qualities of mind and heart. The service she renders to France.—Her sudden death at Saint-Cloud. What remains of us in the tomb.

*Second part* : This death was a grace for the princess. God has protected her from her cradle.—The courage and confidence she showed in her last moments; she left a life full of peril.

*Peroration* : The example of this sudden death is an exhortation to your conversion.

**III.—Marie-Thérèse d'Autriche, Queen of France** (September 1, 1683, at St. Denis, in the presence of Monseigneur the Dauphin).

*Text* : *Sine macula enim sunt ante thronum Dei* (St. John, Apocalypse, XIV, 3). "They are spotless before the throne of God."

*Exordium* : Assemblage of the pure souls in the heavenly Jerusalem : the queen has merited being admitted there.

*Division* : 1, She was in every sense a queen; 2, her life was entirely pure.

*First part* : The house of Austria, and the House of France.—Family and education of Marie-Thérèse.—Her marriage to Louis XIV; the Peace of the Pyrénées.—Eulogy of Louis XIV.

*Second part* : The queen is like the mystical column where God wrote three names : a) The name of God, faith, humility, charity of Marie-Thérèse; b) the name of the Church : her devotion, her submission to the Pope; c) the new name of the Lord, the eucharist.

*Peroration* : Comparison of her death with that of Anne d'Autriche. The necessity for preparing ourselves for a pious death.

**IV.—Anne de Gonzague de Clèves, princess palatine** (August 9, 1685, in the Church of the Carmelites in the faubourg Saint-Jacques, in the presence of the Duke d'Enghien).

*Text* : *Apprehendi te ab extremis terræ...* (Isaiah XLI, 9). "I took thee by the hand to bring thee back from the ends of the earth."

*Exordium* : God gives an example of his grace in the salvation of this princess. To this, sinners should not be indifferent.

*Division* : 1, From what the hand of God saved her; 2, Where the hand of God has elevated her.

*First part* : Anne's infancy at Faremoutiers, at Avenay.—Her worldly life, her widowhood; her success at court.—Her political ambitions. She succours her sister, Queen of Poland.—Her first conversion; her return to unbelief.—The free-thinkers.

*Second part* : The two dreams of the princess.—Her final conversion. Her charity. Her penitence. Her death.

*Peroration* : Bossuet urges sinners to profit by "the portrayal of her virtues, and the examples furnished by her life."

**V. Michel Le Tellier, Chancellor of France** (January 25, 1686, at Saint-Gervais, in the presence of the Papal Nuncio).



*Text* : *Posside sapientiam, acquirere prudentiam...* (Proverbs, IV, 7). "Possess wisdom, and acquire prudence..."

*Exordium* : True wisdom devotes itself to the good that is eternal.

*Division* : Thanks to this wisdom, Le Tellier was moderate and devoted : 1, as a magistrate ; 2, as politician ; 3, as supreme head of the courts.

*First part* : Le Tellier, magistrate. He becomes Minister of Justice, then Minister of War, finally Chancellor.

*Second part* : His conduct during the Fronde.—The services he rendered Anne d'Autriche and Mazarin.

*Third part* : His role as Minister of Justice. He reformed the Council of State. He caused the rights of the Church to be respected. He signed the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.—His Christian death.

*Peroration* : Thanks to his virtues, the day of his death was the finest, the happiest, the most triumphant day of his life."

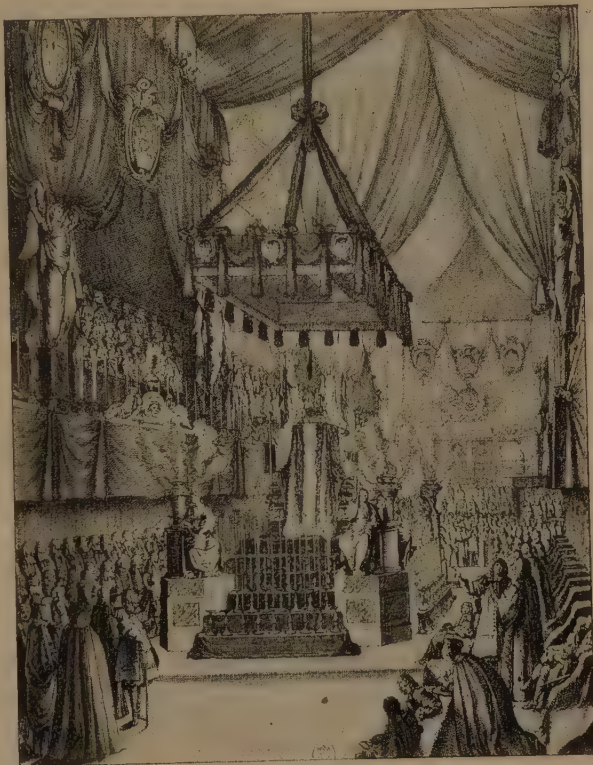
VI.—Louis de Bourbon, prince de Condé. (March 10, 1687, at Notre-Dame, in the presence of the Prince.)

*Text* : *Dominus tecum, virorum fortissime.. Vade in hac fortitudine tua... Ego ero tecum* (Judges VI, 12, 14, 16). "The Lord is with you, O most courageous of men. Go with the courage with which you are filled, I will be with you."

*Exordium* : The orator feels himself crushed by the weight of his task. But all the qualities of the prince would be nothing without his piety; Bossuet proceeds to demonstrate this truth.

*Division* : Condé possessed : 1, qualities of heart; 2, qualities of mind; 3, piety, which is "the whole of man."

*First part* : The heart. Condé's courage : Rocroi, Fribourg.—He is modest and honest.—His faults, which he himself regretted.—His goodness to his family.—His private life at Chantilly.



THE STATE FUNERAL OF HENRIETTA OF ENGLAND  
From the print by Jean Lepautre (1618-1682).

*Second part* : The mind. His military genius, developed by study : Senef, Dunkirk, Lens.—A parallel between Condé and Turenne.

*Third part* : Piety. This was added to his other qualities.—Condé's life during his later years. His death.

*Peroration* : Bossuet calls to the bier of Condé all his friends, all the princes, all the nations. He himself bids adieu to the prince,—and to the genre of the funeral oration.

It is not necessary to make an individual study here of such celebrated discourses, but only to define and characterise Bossuet's genius in his funeral orations.—It was always against his own inclination, and out of gratitude or obedience, that Bossuet cultivated a genre which, before his time, had fallen into disrepute from the defects which seem inseparable from it, and the difficulty of which he keenly felt. In his funeral oration for Father Bourgoing, he said : " I admit that I habitually pity preachers when they deliver funeral panegyrics for princes and great social celebrities. It is not that such subjects do not usually inspire noble ideas... But license and ambition, the almost inseparable companions of great fortunes, interest and injustice, always too visible in great worldly affairs, cause us to walk among dangerous rocks; and it generally happens that God has so little share in such lives that it is difficult to find actions worthy of being praised by his ministers. " Bossuet therefore endeavoured to purify and sanctify, to render worthy of the altars " before which ", he said, " he would pay no false praises ", this kind of panegyric, until his time so meretricious. And he succeeded in this attempt, transforming it by means of *history* and the sermon.

1° *History*.—Before judging Bossuet as a historian in his funeral orations, we should remember that in thus speaking before the family of the deceased, during a ceremony devoted to his memory, he was limited by the conventional restrictions attending such circumstances. Furthermore, in every epoch official eloquence makes use, especially when hampered by *étiquette*, of certain formulas which in other times and places might be misunderstood. Bossuet's compliments and praises must be replaced in their own time and surroundings, and thus *rectified*.—He was always scrupulous in informing himself concerning the personages whose eulogy he was to pronounce. He obtained from Mme de Motteville a memoir on Henriette de France; from Canon Feuillet, a memoir on Madame; he examined the letters of Anne de Gonzague; he questioned every witness; but, above all, he nearly always knew personally his *subjects* :—Madame, Marie-Thérèse, Le Tellier, Condé,—and could give intimate details about them which had *historical* value.—In connection with the roles played by these princes, princesses and queens—all historical in the true sense of the word—Bossuet drew a picture of the events in which they were actors : the English revolution, the Fronde, Louis XIV's wars, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, etc. He drew portraits of Cromwell, Mazarin, Turenne (1), which contributed to the

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p 183.

vivid impression of his discourses. But he intended that this part of his funeral orations should be instructive and moral; he subordinated history to religion. The theory of Divine Providence not only animates his *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*, but is found in all his funeral orations. Nor did he hesitate to recall, if only by allusions, quickly appreciated by his contemporaries, certain political mistakes (Condé), certain weaknesses (Charles I), or certain excesses repented of (Anne de Gonzague). Frequently his silence, or the turn he gives to his eulogy, is a lesson: for instance in his oration on Marie-Thérèse.

2° *The Sermon*.—Each funeral oration is in fact a sermon, in which the deceased serves as an illustrious example. La Harpe thought to disparage the oration on Anne de Gonzague by calling it “the most sublime of sermons,” but as a matter of fact he characterised them all. Bossuet proposed above everything else to instruct and edify his hearers. So each funeral oration may be connected with one or several celebrated sermons; and Bossuet often inserted in an oration parts of sermons which he had already delivered. Thus, the eulogy of Henriette de France is a sermon on *La Providence* and on *Les Devoirs des rois*; that of Henriette d'Angleterre is a sermon on *La mort* (the division corresponding exactly with the famous sermon given in 1662) (1); that of Anne de Gonzague is a sermon on *L'Impénitence finale*, on *L'Endurcissement*, on *La Providence*, etc.; that of Marie-Thérèse is a sermon on *La Pureté*; that of Condé, a



PORTRAIT OF HENRIETTA OF ENGLAND

From the print by Grignon.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 180.

sermon on *L'Ambition*, on *L'Honneur du monde*, etc. In short, in the midst of praises and an account of historical events, the principal aim of the orator is never lost to view : he wishes to remain, and must remain, a preacher.

The style of the *funeral orations* is more finished than that of the sermons, and is generally of a noble and sustained gravity. But there are parts which are simple and familiar in style, for example, the second part of the oration on Henriette de France, many passages in that of Anne de Gonzague, and the third part of that on Condé. A few, such as the one on Marie-Thérèse, recall by their tone *Les Méditations sur l'Évangile*. So, even in these ceremonial works, in which Bossuet felt himself obliged to develop a certain evenness of style, we yet find an astonishing variety.

**Bossuet as tutor to the Dauphin and Historian.**—If we would know how Bossuet understood his work and duties as tutor, we have but to read the Latin letter he addressed to Pope Innocent XI on March 8, 1679. His program comprised : the study of religion, by the commented reading of Holy Scripture and the history of the Church; the study of Latin : grammar, exercises, reading of authors, among others Virgil, Terence, Cæsar, Cicero (and we should notice here that Bossuet did not have his pupil read parts of Latin authors, but their entire works, consecutively, being sure, he said, that each part can never be clearly understood, nor seen in all its beauty, except to one who has seen the whole work as we see edifices, absorbing the complete design and the whole idea); the study of geography, in which he included an extensive study of customs; history, especially that of France. Bossuet himself prepared each history lesson, and explained it to the Dauphin. " We recited it to him aloud," he said, " or as much as he could easily retain; we made him repeat it; he then wrote it in French and then in Latin : this served him as a Latin exercise and we corrected with equal care his French and his Latin. On Saturdays he read over all that he had perused during the week, and as the work grew we divided it into books which we very often made him read over again. " Add to this, philosophy, Roman law, natural history, physics and mathematics.—To carry out this extensive program M. de Montausier, the Dauphin's governor, had given Bossuet collaborators : Huet and Fleury for letters and history, and Blondel for sciences. But, except for sciences (Bossuet himself was studying anatomy), he did the whole work alone, began over again a study of grammar and of the classical authors, wrote historical text-books which show, considering the times, a serious knowledge of sources, and was ready, as soon as this education was finished, to publish his *Discours sur l'histoire universelle* (1681). The *Politique tirée de l'Écriture sainte*, the *Traité de la connaissance de Dieu et de soi-même*, which he had also written for the Dauphin, only appeared after his death, in 1709 and 1726. The result of all these efforts, as we know, was nearly negative. The Dauphin had a dull and apathetic



mind, and appears to have profited very little by the instruction of such a tutor (1).

**Le Discours sur l'Histoire universelle** (1684) is but one part of the long course of history which Bossuet wrote for the Dauphin; the sequel, announced in his letter to Pope Innocent XI, and which was to cover the period from Charlemagne to the seventeenth century, was never written, and we have only the notes for it.—The *Discours* (Latin: *discursus*, a methodical and coherent exposition, with no reference to *oratory*) includes all events from the *Creation* to *Charlemagne*. The first part, entitled *Les Époques* and divided into twelve chapters, is a chronological and synchronous summing up of the chief events (2); in the second part, entitled *La suite de la Religion*, Bossuet shows how the Christian



PORTRAIT OF LOUIS, DAUPHIN OF FRANCE, CALLED THE GRAND-DAUPHIN  
From a contemporary print

religion was prepared from Moses' time, and how everything, in the old as well as the new law, resulted in an uninterrupted progress toward the triumph of the Church; in the third part, *Les Empires*, Bossuet studies the

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 185.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 412.

working of Providence in the great empires of antiquity, and how, absorbed one by the other, these empires formed, under the Roman yoke, the necessary unity for the diffusion of the Gospel.—Bossuet, as historian, remains always, as we should not forget, the theologian and educator; he proclaims himself to be both at the beginning and end of the Discours. But, with this reservation, nobody can question the substantial nature of his documentation, the power and breadth of his views, the sureness with which he has analysed the Bible, and characterised the Roman people. We no longer conceive of history handled in this manner; but we should pay homage to the honesty and profundity shown by Bossuet who, as a *philosopher of history*, despite the difference of means and object, is a true precursor of Montesquieu.

We need not consider here the *Politique tirée de l'Écriture sainte*, only published in 1709, five years after its author's death. It was in this book that Bossuet established himself as the theorist of absolute power and divine right.

This work is frequently referred to, but little read, and is therefore somewhat misunderstood. What we should remember is that, in founding the power of kings upon religion, Bossuet imposed upon them many more duties than rights. To those whom the length of this treatise discourages, we would recommend the sermon on *Les Devoirs des Rois* (1662), which is a powerful sketch of the longer work.

**Bossuet as controversialist.**—We have already spoken of the space occupied in Bossuet's work by *controversy*, that is, polemics against all those whom he considered as enemy of the faith. This part is so important that it might be affirmed that all Bossuet's works are more or less inspired by controversy, Bossuet being always "in the breach." Thus, such and such a sermon or oration, when closely examined with regard to dates, assumes the appearance of an action, and corresponds to some movement of opinion or to the publication of some work; and Bossuet truly said, like Voltaire, "I have written in order to act (1)." But as we cannot undertake a detailed study, we shall limit ourselves to Bossuet's chief works of controversy.

**1° Protestantism.**—Bossuet's first printed work was the *Réfutation du catéchisme de Paul Ferri* (Metz, 1655). Later on, while aiming at the conversion of Turin, Bossuet composed an *Exposition de la foi catholique*, which he published in 1671. In 1682 he published, again against Protestants, the *Traité de la communion sous les deux espèces*. At length, in 1688, he published in two volumes his *Histoire des variations des Églises protestantes*, to which must be joined the

(1) Thus, the *funeral oration on Anne de Gonzague* (1685) was directed against the *free-thinkers*. The second part of the *Discours sur l'histoire universelle* (1681) should especially be read as a reply to the efforts towards rationalist exegesis of Richard Simon, whose work Bossuet had caused to be suppressed in 1678. The *funeral oration on Le Tellier* (1686) becomes very interesting when we think that Bossuet was then writing his *Histoire des variations* (1688), etc.

six *Avertissements* (1689-1691) and *Défense de l'Histoire des variations* (1691). Everybody agrees in admiring the conscientiousness and sureness with which Bossuet documented his history; he worked upon it for several years, making his own researches, and using those of savants among his friends, to amass all the texts on which he wished to found his argument (1). And it is enough to open these two volumes, in the original edition of 1688, to be struck by the abundance of the notes and references, printed as *side-notes*. What Bossuet particularly wished was that his adversaries should be obliged to bow before his facts,—and indeed in all the polemics in which he engaged his ideas and conclusions were attacked, but never his documents or his historical method.—What was Bossuet's intention? To prove to Protestants, by a statement of the *variations in their churches*, since Luther, that they lacked that *unity which is the fundamental nature of the true Church*. The forced conclusion was the return to Catholicism, which alone possesses continuous unity, Though Bossuet did not accomplish the object he so passionately desired to attain—for in this discussion he was an apostle and “had more love than hate,”—he at least produced one of his most profound and most vital works. The fifteen books of which it is



PORTRAIT OF PASTEUR JEAN-CLAUDE

From a print of the XVII century.

composed follow the historical order, and the following passages may be mentioned :—In Book I, the *portrait of Luther*; in Book II, his disputes with *Carlostadt and Zwingle*; in Book III, *portrait of Melancthon* (2); in Book VII, the English revolutions, and *portrait of Henry VIII*; in Book IX, *portrait of Calvin*, etc. All these personages, altogether distinct and wonderfully lifelike, lead, in some sort, the progress of the Reformation. The reader gradually becomes interested even in the most arduous portion of the theological part of

(1) Cf. A. RÉBELLIAU, *Bossuet historien du protestantisme*, Paris, 1891.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle. p. 414.

the work, so completely does the analysis of doctrines amalgamate with the narrative and explain it (1).

2° *Quietism*.—An explanation of this controversy will be found in the chapter on Fénelon, and the works of the two adversaries will be cited then.

3° *Maximes et réflexions sur la comédie* (1694).—A *Théatin* monk, Father Caffaro, had written a letter to Boursault, which the latter published, unsigned, at the beginning of an edition of his plays. This monk held that the anathemas of the Church directed against the drama could no longer be applied to the dramas of the seventeenth century, which had become moral. Bossuet saw in this affirmation a process of reasoning which compromised the authority of the Church, and he replied to Father Caffaro in a brochure the tone of which now appears to us to have been too violent, but which shows us once again the ardent conviction of a priest who did not think it necessary, like Fénelon in his *Lettre à l'Académie*, to take any roundabout way for exposing and defending the traditional doctrines of the Church (2).

4° *La défense de la tradition et des saints Pères*, which was directed against Richard Simon, the first to introduce exegesis in the study of the Scriptures, was only published in 1753 (3).

**Other works by Bossuet.**—We have not space even to enumerate the many works by Bossuet; but we should mention two books which prove the extent and variety of his genius: *Les Méditations sur l'Évangile* and *Les Élévations sur les Mystères*. These works were written by Bossuet for the nuns of the *Visitation de Meaux* in 1694 and 1695. They were not published until 1727 and 1731, by his nephew, Abbé Bossuet. In these pages, which are at once exact, sensible and inspired, Bossuet's lyricism appears in its most exalted perfection (4). In 1731 also his *Traité de la Concupiscence* was published, several pages of which exhibit sublime eloquence (5).—Finally, Bossuet left an immense correspondence, of great value for its knowledge of mankind, and in which the writer's devotion to his immediate duties shows itself with absolute simplicity. His finest letters are "letters of direction," written chiefly to nuns in his own diocese, Meaux (6).

**Bossuet the Writer.**—We have already indicated the sources and elements of Bossuet's style: the Scriptures, the Fathers, and Latin antiquity.—But how

(1) Concerning the entire work, cf. F. HÉMON, *Cours de littérature*, Bossuet, p. 25.

(2) See the Gazier edition of the *Maximes* (Paris, Belin).

(3) Cf. CALVET, *Bossuet* (Hatier), p. 593.

(4) Cf. CALVET, *Bossuet* (Hatier), pp. 534 et 545.

(5) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 410.

(6) CALVET, *Bossuet* (Hatier), p. 450.—See Abbé BELLON's work, *Bossuet directeur de conscience*, Paris, 1896. — G. LANSON, *Lettres choisies du dix-septième siècle*, p. 393. — *Correspondance de Bossuet*, published by MM. Urbain et Lévêque, in the *Collection des grands écrivains de la France* (Hachette).



many others at that same period read the same authors, were nourished on the same substance, yet in no wise wrote like Bossuet! Definitions therefore, which merely class Bossuet with his contemporaries, instead of placing him apart, are almost superfluous. The nearest approach to characterising Bossuet's style we can make, is that it fully satisfies that requirement for fitness which is our first demand, that it is therefore as natural as it is varied, and that it is the style of an orator and a poet in the truest sense of the word.—Bossuet's vocabulary is extremely rich; his syntax follows the movement of his thought; his metaphors never seem to have been added as a veneer, but are evolved from the very substance of his subject.—To Bossuet may be applied, more than to anyone else, Buffon's definition of style: "Well thought, well felt, well rendered."

### III. — BOURDALOUE (1632-1704).

Bossuet preached his last course of sermons at court in 1669. On the same day on which he descended from the royal pulpit, December 25, Bourdaloue was heard at Paris for the first time, in the chapel of the *maison professe* of the Jesuits. He immediately achieved prodigious success, and was at once summoned to court for the Advent of 1670.

**Preaching at the Court.**—Every year, during Advent (from All Saints' Day to Christmas), Lent, and the great feasts like Ascension, Pentecost and the Assumption, the entire court heard sermons in the chapel of whatever château the court then occupied (the Louvre, Saint-Germain or Versailles).—Louis XIV himself chose the preachers. At the end of each Lent, the Chief Chaplain showed him a list of the most admired preachers. The king examined their names, listened to recommendations, and informed himself as to outside comments (1). Finally he designated two orators, one for Advent, the other for Lent, and these held the title of Preacher to the King (2).

**Bourdaloue's Success.**—It was the accepted custom that no preacher could be summoned more than three times to court, but Bossuet preached there four times: Lent in 1662 and 1666, and Advent in 1665 and 1669; while Bourdaloue returned ten times, preaching before the king Advents in 1670, 1684, 1686, 1689, 1691 and 1693, and Lents of 1672, 1674, 1675, 1680 and 1682.—It is difficult for us to understand why the seventeenth century should have preferred Bourdaloue to Bossuet. Bossuet now occupies so incontestably the first rank, that in stating that Bourdaloue met with much greater success as a preacher, we are

(1) Thus Louis XIV once asked Boileau: "Who is this Father Le Tourneux who preaches in Paris, and everybody goes?" "Sire", replied the satirist, "everybody always runs after novelty; he is a preacher who preaches the Gospel."

(2) See Abbé HUREL's work, *Les Orateurs sacrés à la cour de Louis XIV*, 2 vol., Didier.

puzzled. What an outburst of enthusiasm upon Bourdaloue's appearance! This is apparent in Mme de Sévigné's correspondence. We cannot assume that this was merely a caprice of taste on the part of the incomparable marquise, for, before having heard Bourdaloue herself, she only reports what people are saying: "He surpasses all past marvels... He preaches divinely... It seems as if nobody had ever preached before!" Her admiration redoubles when she becomes one of his habitual listeners, and, as she says, *elle va en Bourdaloue*. "He has often left me breathless," she says, "because of the extreme attention with which one hangs upon his words, and I do not draw a breath until he is pleased to finish." And elsewhere, "*Bon Dieu!* nothing can express the praise he deserves!" She greatly admired Bossuet, but never spoke of him in such terms. We must repeat then, emphatically, that the seventeenth century preferred Bourdaloue's sermons to Bossuet's. This opinion is confirmed by Voltaire, who says (*Siècle de Louis XIV*, chapter xxxii): "One of the first who displayed in the pulpit an always eloquent reasoning was Father Bourdaloue, about 1668... When Bourdaloue appeared, Bossuet was no longer considered the first of preachers."

**Reasons for this success.**—There are very clear reasons for explaining this preference. The first is that Bourdaloue wrote carefully his entire discourse, and recited it with great art. He even brought his MS. with him to be consulted in case of need. From this method resulted an absolute sureness of speech, without any of the imperfections which occur during improvisation by even the most practiced orators. Now, in this respect, the audience was extremely exacting, and included those who only the day before had called at the Hotel de Rambouillet or applauded Racine. Taste, under the influence of the *Précieuses* and of the writers formed in their school, had become excessively refined.

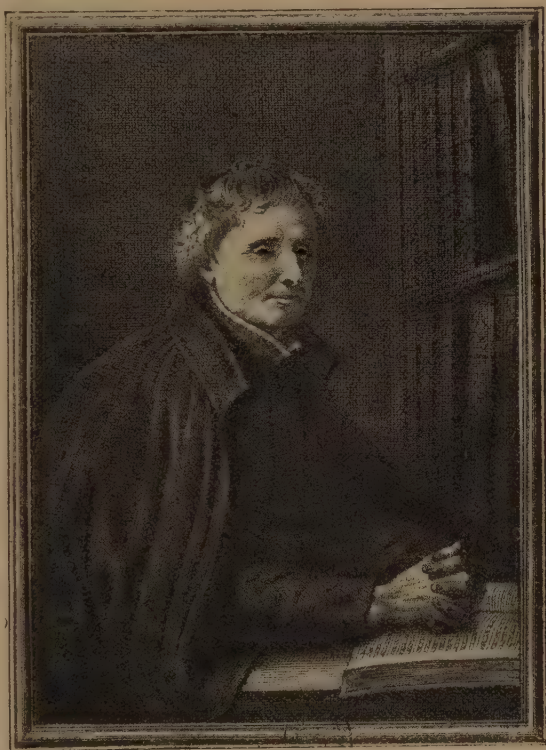
On the other hand, Bourdaloue placed himself on a level with his auditors; instead of seeking to carry them along with him at one uplift to the most supreme contemplation, he descended into their midst, and said: "I know you; these are your passions, your vices, your whims, your cowardice..." He drew portraits, searched hearts, sketched from life the career of the courtier set in opposition to the Gospel lessons. Now, what is a court? A place where each one knows the others, criticises and traduces them. It is not necessary to describe this "country" after La Fontaine and La Bruyère.

Not, certainly, that the virtuous and austere Jesuit had ever sought the vain glory of this world. Bourdaloue was convinced that by laying bare the wounds of the soul, in drawing—from his experience as a confessor—faithful and vivid portraits of the vices, and in pointing out the means for healing these wounds and curing these passions, he must convert a greater number of his hearers. Was it his fault if, instead of taking home to themselves the moral lesson which

formed the conclusion of all his sermons, the courtiers were lying in wait for the least allusions, and sought a worldly pleasure, an often malignant satisfaction, in words which were meant to teach them nothing but charity and virtue ? All the same, deliberate allusion is frequent in Bourdaloue's work, as we shall see in enumerating his principal sermons. Mme de Sévigné said : " He bangs as if he were deaf. Let those save themselves who can ! " Sometimes he caused scandal : there were some who did not wish to accept the lessons which seemed too openly applied to them. But even these scandals were a cause of success.

That was not all ; and what spoils Bourdaloue for us only made him the more acceptable to his hearers in 1670. He was for ever reasoning : we are inclined to say he reasoned too much, leaving nothing for the imagination or the heart. One cannot be sure if that was eloquence or geometry. Bourdaloue excelled in dividing his sermons : indeed he carried this art so far that what was intended to be a help degenerated into a burden. La Bruyère in his chapter on *la Chaire*, and Fénelon in his *Dialogues sur l'éloquence* and his *Lettre à l'Académie*, allude to this fault in Bourdaloue.

In the second half of the seventeenth century reason was the ideal of all minds ; under the influence of Descartes sentiment had little by little given



BOURDALOUE

*From the portrait painted by Joucnet and engraved by Simonneau.*

This portrait presents all the characters of an image copied from the dead masque. The tradition which says that Bourdaloue preached with his eyes shut is a mere legend.

place to it. But reason and reasoning are different, and at times contradictory. This was the error of Bourdaloue's and Arnauld's contemporaries; they said "the great Bourdaloue" and "the great Arnauld," they never said "the great Bossuet" or "the great Racine."

**Bourdaloue's Sermons.**—Among his best sermons should be mentioned: *La Pensée de la Mort*, *Le Respect humain*, *L'Ambition*, *Le Devoir des Pères* (in which he protests vigorously against religious vocations being forced upon younger sons (1)), *L'Hypocrisie* (a very interesting discussion of the question of *Tartuffe*, that is to say, the opportunity for attacking hypocrisy through the drama) (2), *L'Aumône*, *Le Pardon des Injures*, *La Sévérité évangélique* (in which people thought to see the portrait of M. de Tréville, a Captain of Musketeers who had retired to Port-Royal), *La Médisance* (a reply to *Les Provinciales*), *Le Jugement dernier* (3), *Les Divertissements du monde* (4), *La Restitution* (5). We have altogether eighty-five of Bourdaloue's sermons, the text of which, published after his death by Father Bretonneau, is not of guaranteed authenticity.

#### IV. — OTHER PREACHERS.

**FLÉCHIER** (1632-1740) was at first a professor in the colleges of the Fathers of Christian Doctrine, and formed his taste at the Hotel de Rambouillet at a time when *préciosité* was no longer anything but a fault. Taken to Auvergne by M. de Caumartin as tutor to his son, he attended the meetings of the *Grands Jours d'Auvergne* in 1665. From this resulted his first work, which is still interesting to read (*Mémoires sur les Grands Jours d'Auvergne*) (6).—He began to preach about 1670, and brought to the pulpit a subtle and refined style which, without lacking either theological precision or moral strength, must have charmed rather than convinced or moved.

Although he preached two courses of sermons at court, he is chiefly known by his funeral orations. He delivered seven with great success, at the very time when Bossuet himself triumphed in this genre; and a few of them are still good reading. The two most remarkable are that on the Duchesse de Montausier (Julie d'Angennes, daughter of Mme de Rambouillet), which is a document in the history of *préciosité*, 1672 (7), and that on Turenne (1676), a few passages of which will always be quoted (8).—Fléchier left an important correspondence,

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 425.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 421.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 188.

(4) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 189.

(5) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 424.

(6) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 438.

(7) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 436.

(8) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 191; 2nd cycle, p. 434.



which does credit to his mind and heart (1). He had been appointed Bishop of Lavaur in 1685, and Bishop of Nîmes in 1687; and during his administration of the latter diocese he was zealous and charitable while quarrels went on between Catholics and Protestants.

**MASCARON** (1634-1703) belonged to the congregation of the Oratory. We no longer possess his sermons; but he was very famous as a preacher, and from 1667 onwards he preached six Lents and six Advents at court. At the same time he distinguished himself in the funeral oration, and in 1666 that on Anne d'Autriche—which we possess—laid the foundation of his reputation. (It is unfortunate that Bossuet's is lost, as a comparison between the two would be interesting.) The next in order were those on Henriette d'Angleterre (and in this instance a comparison can be made with Bossuet, and while the latter's work is obviously better, one does not regret having read Mascaron's), on the Duke de Beaufort, on Turenne, and on Chancellor Séguier. Mascaron is archaic for his time; he evinces pride mingled with subtlety. But he was a born orator, and his eloquence was both natural and vehement. It is said that his rough frankness displeased the courtiers.

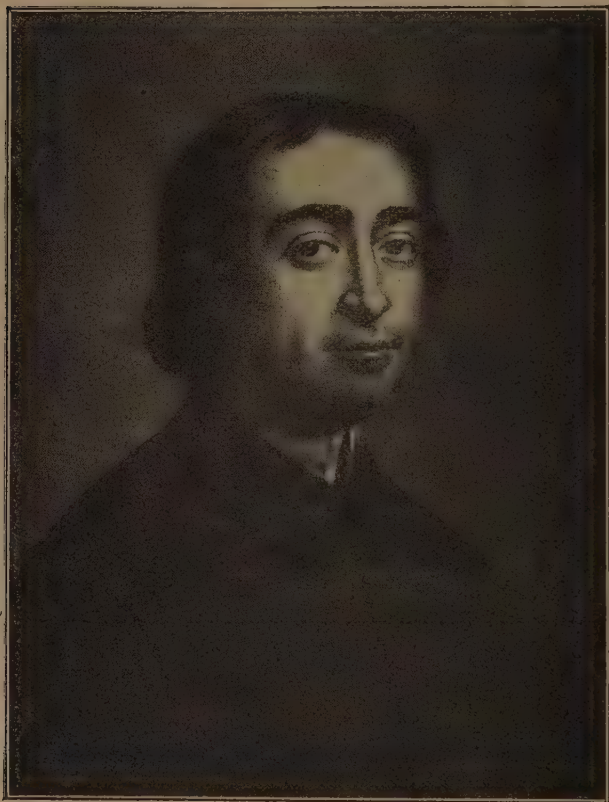


ESPRIT FLÉCHIER

From the portrait painted by Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659-1743)  
and engraved by Gérard Edelinck (1649-1707).

(1) Cf G. LANSO, *Lettres choisies du dix-septième siècle*, p. 585.

**MASSILLON** (1663-1742) also belonged to the Oratory. At first a professor in the colleges of this illustrious order, particularly at Juilly, he revealed himself as an orator, though led, in spite of himself, it is said, to preaching. He



MASSILLON

*From a portrait painted and engraved in black style by A. Bouys.*

Massillon is here represented at the time when he preached

Lent at Court.

preached Lent at Montpellier in 1698, and the following year at the Church of the Oratory in the rue Saint-Honoré at Paris. Summoned to court, he preached there the Advent of 1699 and the Lents of 1701 and 1704. Then followed his funeral orations on the Prince de Conti (1711), on the Dauphin (1711), and on Louis XIV (1745): the exordium of his oration is still quoted. It was true eloquence, and in Bossuet's best manner, to begin the eulogy of Louis le Grand with these words: "God alone is great, my brethren... (1)"—In 1718, when he had just been appointed Bishop of Clermont, he was called

to preach Lent before the young Louis XV; and this collection of ten sermons is called *Le Petit Carême* to distinguish it from his *Grand Carême* (2). He then retired to his Clermont diocese where, like Bossuet at Meaux, he

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 431.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 194; 2nd cycle, p. 429.

devoted himself chiefly to its administration and to the direction of consciences.

Massillon has been considered, by all the critics of the eighteenth century, as one of the most perfect of pulpit orators. Voltaire, in his *Liste des Écrivains français* published after the *Siècle de Louis XIV*, described him as follows: "The preacher who knew the world best; more flowery than Bourdaloue, more agreeable, his eloquence revealed the courtier, the Academician and the wit, as well as the moderate and tolerant philosopher." Here we have all the reasons proper to the eighteenth century, and Massillon had perhaps disavowed this eulogy, which was corroborated by La Harpe and d'Alembert. In fact, the eighteenth century praised Massillon for having given a second place to dogma, and for substituting for Christian morals the morals of men of the world.

Now, in spite of authorities like Nisard and Brunetière, who reflect Voltaire's judgment, this is not the impression left by reading Massillon's sermons. His moral system, very severe as Brunetière says, seems inseparable from dogma. His sermons on *La Mort*, on *La Passion de Jésus-Christ*, on *L'Impénitence finale* (which may be compared with Bossuet's), are Christian in the most complete sense of the word. And what about the most frequently quoted, on *Le Petit nombre des élus*? What would remain of the significance of the magnificent passage which thrilled an auditory of courtiers with admiration and emotion ("Grand Dieu, où sont vos élus? et que reste-t-il pour votre partage?") if its dogmatic meaning were suppressed (1)?-- It is true, however, that Massillon is more flowery and more academic than Bossuet and Bourdaloue, and has been with some reason surnamed the French Isocrates. In fact, he knew how to construct a period, break off a development, balance a comparison, and he used all the figures of speech like the cleverest rhetorician. But he did not carry this too far, having as much taste as he had art; and selections from his works still remain models of the purest French.

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(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 427.

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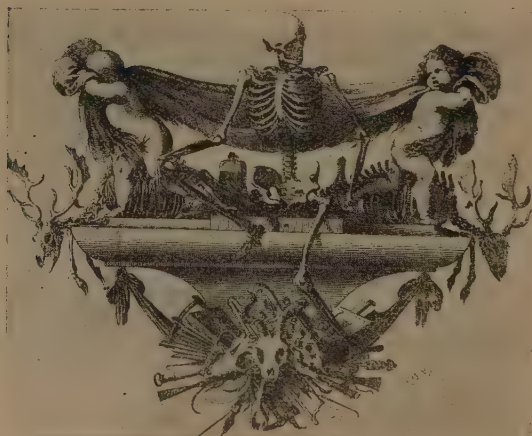
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BOTTOM OF LAMP BY SEBASTIEN LECLERC (1637-1714)





THE NYMPH'S BALL

Decorative frieze by Jean Lepautre (1618-1682).

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE WORLDLY MORALISTS. — LA ROCHEFOUCAULD. LA BRUYÈRE.

#### SUMMARY

All the seventeenth century genres had their **morals**. But **moralists**, properly speaking, are the authors whose only subject was morals.

1° There were numerous moralists before **LA ROCHEFOUCAULD** and among his contemporaries : Coëffeteau, Father Senault, Father Lemoyne, the Chevalier de Méré, Abbé Esprit, etc.

2° **LA ROCHEFOUCAULD** (1613-1680) was a brave soldier who was connected with the Fronde, and who gained nothing from his active life but disillusion. During his retreat he composed his **Mémoires** (1662); and later he frequented the **salon** of Mme de Sablé, where it was a diversion to make moral **maxims**. In 1665 he published the first edition of his **Maximes**.—His system consists in exposing motives of interest and self-love in actions which we believe to be virtuous; this system, though a bit superficial, possess the advantage of making us more severe with ourselves.—By the pregnant sobriety of his style La Rochefoucauld is a great writer.

2° **LA BRUYÈRE** (1645-1696) made the most penetrating observations on the world, with a tinge of misanthropy. He translated the *Æthici Characteres* of the Greek philosopher Theophrastus, placing them after chapters on the **characters** of his own century; and as one edition succeeded another, he increased the original part of his book.—No sequence must be sought for in his sixteen chapters; La Bruyère wished to please the reader by variety and the unexpected. He had no "**system**." He wished to **improve** mankind by **solidarity** or **charity**, or **pity**, etc. In some of his bolder passages La Bruyère anticipated the political writers and economists of the eighteenth century.—He excelled in painting portraits.—His style is sometimes too consciously perfect, and his art too often makes one forget the solidity of his subject.



DECORATED LETTER  
by Abraham Bosse (1602-1676).

**circumstances which favoured the taste for Morals in the Seventeenth Century.**—It can be said that all

the writers of the seventeenth century were psychologists and moralists. The general mental tendency to see and study only the "inner man," arose from many causes, the chief of which were: (a) The development of religious life under the influence of eminent theologians, from Saint François de Sales to the Port-Royal writers. The worldly importance acquired by *casuistry* can only be explained by the sincere practice of conscience examination, which is the basis of all psychology: one studied one's self, no longer after Montaigne's manner, but with the desire to know

oneself with a view to self-correction.—b) The reform of preaching corresponded to the growth of this intimate Practice of religion: flowery and frivolous elegance made room for the teaching of Christian morality founded on dogma. This resulted in analyses, or portraits which were no longer *ornaments*, but, founded as they were on the experience acquired by the preacher in the confessional, were human documents. The audience took more and more pleasure in recognising itself.—c) This taste, furthermore, was promoted by the pleasure taken in *salon* life. At Mme de Rambouillet's, and in all the other *salons* formed later, until the end of the century, politics was less a subject of conversation than those things which related to the mind and the heart. An agreeable pastime was needed. People placed *sur le tapis* moral questions; they made *portraits* (1) and *maxims*.—d) Especially had this society the right to believe that it had reached a certain perfection, and, as Nisard says, "Societies which have arrived at maturity have a yearning for making rules, and for crystallising their experiences into maxims. Towards the second third of the seventeenth century French society might well believe that no other human society had more knowledge of man. The moment was unique for laying down rules of conduct for future ages... The time was ripe for the moralists. France, in 1665, had the right to set up as an example to all mankind (2)."

The novel was invaded by psychology and morals. The number of *Mémoires*, and the general character of *Lettres* published prove that the writers liked to analyse and describe others. The same tendency is observable in all the genres. The proof of this lies in the fact that the historian of seventeenth-century literature is compelled to discuss the morals of Corneille, Racine, Molière and La Fontaine.

(1) The most curious of these portraits were published by Mlle de Montpensier under the title *La Galerie des peintures* (1663). This collection was re-edited in 1869 by Ed. Barthélemy (Paris, Didier).

(2) NISARD, *Histoire de la Littérature française*, III, p. 166

Since, then, all the writers of this great age,—no matter the genre in which they wrote—would enshrine morals, in their works, why is the name *moralists* applied to only a few? Those are called *moralists* who “treat of morals, not among other things, but apart and as their unique subject”. (Nisard).

## I. — PREDECESSORS AND CONTEMPORARIES OF LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

Our object always being to show clearly that great writers are not isolated, before studying La Rochefoucauld we must name a few of the numerous moralists who preceded or accompanied him (1). We may mention: *Le Tableau des passions humaines, de leurs causes et de leurs effets*, by Nicolas Coeffeteau, who died Bishop of Marseilles in 1623, celebrated as a preacher and translator;—*Les Caractères des passions* (5 vols., 1640-1662), by Doctor Cureau de la Chambre, who was a psychologist;—*L'Essai des passions*, by Father Senault, of the Oratory, a celebrated preacher (1641);—*Les Peintures morales*, by Father Lemoyne, Jesuit, author of an epic poem on Saint Louis, and of the treatise on *La Dévotion aisée*;—*Le Doctrinal des Mœurs*, by Gomberville (1646);—*La Morale chrétienne*, by the Protestant minister, Moïse Amyraut (1592-1660).

Among his immediate contemporaries: *Les Conversations* (1669) and the *Maximes* (1692) by the Chevalier de Méré (died 1685), who boasted, as we know, of having had a powerful influence upon Pascal, and posed as an arbiter of worldly conventions (2). Abbé Jacques Esprit published, in 1678, his *Traité de la fausseté des vertus humaines*; and in the same year appeared the *Maximes* of Mme de Sablé. We should add *La Morale du monde ou les Conversations* of Mlle de Scudéry (1680-1692, 10 vols.); the works of the “Protestant Nicole,” La Placette, and another Protestant, Jacques Abbadié. M. Rébelliau also enumerates translations of Italian and Spanish works, and treatises on Civility and good breeding.

## II. — LA ROCHEFOUCAULD (1613-1680).

**Biography.**—La Rochefoucauld's life divides into two periods: the first during which he wished to be, and thought himself to be, an active politician; the second, in which, disappointed in his ambition, he first wrote his *Mémoires* and later his *Maximes*.

(1) This list is taken from M. A. RÉBELLIAU (*Histoire de la Littérature française*, Julléville-Colin, t. V, p. 398).—Cf. LEVRAULT, *Maximes et Portraits* (Évolution du genre), Paris, Delaplane.

(2) On the Chevalier de Méré, cf. SAINT-BEUVE, *Derniers portraits*, and G. LANSON, *Choix de Lettres du dix-septième siècle*, p. 143.

François VI, Prince de Marcillac, who became, at the death of his father, Duke de la Rochefoucauld, belonged to one of the greatest French families, allied to the kings. His father had been a Duke and peer, Governor of Poitou, and was disgraced by Richelieu. Probably reared in the country, François de la Rochefoucauld was obliged to work under a tutor, without going either to a school or a university, and it is thought that his studies were not a great success. At sixteen years of age he joined the army, and became *mestre de camp* to the regiment of Auvergne; he fought bravely from 1635 to 1648, and was wounded. Towards the end of Richelieu's ministry he served Anne of Austria as *galant chevalier*, and went so far as to take part in a plot, concocted by Mme de Chevreuse, for running off with the queen, which ended in his being imprisoned in the Bastille, and later exiled to his estate. From 1642 to 1648 he lived at his château of Verteuil. But the Fronde seduced his romantic temperament. He joined in it with a courage which covered much pride and hardly less passion for the *beaux yeux* of Mme de Longueville. He came out of this adventure with one wound which nearly cost him his sight, and with more experience of human ingratitude. After a voluntary retirement of three years, he returned to Paris in 1656. French society was then perhaps at its best. If the Hôtel de Rambouillet had somewhat fallen off, other *salons* had been opened such as that of Mlle de Scudéry, of Mme de La Fayette, of Mme de Sablé, etc. La Rochefoucauld liked best Mme de Sablé's; it was there he composed his *Maximes*, the first edition of which appeared in 1665.

La Rochefoucauld received a cruel blow in the death of one of his sons, killed in 1672 at the passage of the Rhine. The influence of Mme de La Fayette, following that of Mme de Sablé, seems to have softened a little the misanthropy of the ageing Duke. He revised and corrected his *Maximes*, which brought him worldwide reputation. Urged to present himself as candidate to the French Academy, he declined. He died, in the presence of Bossuet, on March 17, 1680.

**His Character.**—La Rochefoucauld has left us a portrait, drawn by himself, rather flattering as to physical appearance, but which, as regards his morals, contains some interesting admissions. He describes himself as melancholy and guarded; he likes conversation, especially with women; he has some of the softer qualities, but is almost foreign to compassion (1).

This portrait should be completed by the one which Cardinal de Retz mischievously made of him: "There has always been something of the *je ne sais quoi* in M. de La Rochefoucauld... He has always been irresolute... He has never been a warrior, though very much of a soldier; he has never been a good courtier, though he has always intended to be. He has never been a good partisan, though he has always been expected to be (2),.. " According to

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 413.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 500.



Retz, a keen observer, La Rochefoucauld must have been above everything an irresolute man; and the irresolute man quickly becomes a misanthrope, because he makes other people responsible for his indecision, and believes more readily in their wickedness than in his own lack of will power. But the irresolute man is often very intelligent; while only the foolish never hesitate.

**The Mémoires (1662).**

—La Rochefoucauld wrote the greater part of his *Mémoires* at Verteuil, after the Fronde, from which latter misadventure he emerged disillusioned and even irritated. He also felt the need to make his narrative, in which he never mentions events except in relation to himself and his friends, less a complement than a contradiction to Cardinal de Retz's *Mémoires*. La Rochefoucauld was too polished a *grand seigneur* to write in the brusque and impulsive style which made Retz a rival of Saint-Simon; but he evinced the distinguished equanimity and psychological finesse which, in the portraits (1), foretell the author of the *Maximes*. —Only incorrect and garbled editions of his *Mémoires* appeared in La Rochefoucauld's lifetime, at Rouen and in Holland. After his death authentic fragments were published, but jumbled with other *Mémoires*; and it was only in



LA ROCHEFOUCAULD

From the portrait painted by Ferdinand and engraved by Petit.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 164.

our time that the edition of the *Grands écrivains* (Hachette, 1874) has supplied us with the authentic text.

**How La Rochefoucauld composed his *Maximes*. Editions.**—In 1656, when La Rochefoucauld returned to Paris, Mme de Sablé lived in the *Place Royale* (*Place des Vosges*). She had been mixed up in the Fronde; but her political ideas growing wiser, she had become little more than a *malade imaginaire*, an excellent hostess, and a witty woman. Her salon assembled men of letters, of learning, theologians and ladies of quality: Abbé Esprit, Abbé d'Ailly, Domat the lawyer, Mme de Schomberg, wife of the marshal (Mlle de Hautefort), M. and Mme de Montausier, the Countess de Maure, the Duchess de Longueville, etc. In 1659 Mme de Sablé removed to the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, in a hôtel next to Port-Royal. Her habitual guests soon found the way there, and several of the *messieurs* honoured her salon with their presence, among them Arnauld, Pascal and Nicole.

Each salon had its *genre* or its *hobby*. At the Grande Mademoiselle's they made *portraits*, and at Mme de Sablé's *maximes*. An opinion upon some current moral question was suggested, and each guest took part in the discussion. Then, between two meetings, each endeavoured to put his opinion in writing, making it as terse and piquant as possible. In this manner appeared later on *Les Maximes de Mme la marquise de Sablé*, published by Abbé Ailly, who added some of his own; then those of Abbé Esprit, those of Domat, of Méré, etc. Everybody succeeded more or less; but La Rochefoucauld succeeded better than the others, that is all.

The first edition of the *Maxims* appeared in 1665, without the author's name, and preceded by a *Discours*, which was for a long time attributed to Segrais (1).

**Morals of the *Maximes*.**—When we have read a few of the maxims of Mme de Sablé, of the Abbés Ailly and Esprit, etc., we are no longer scandalised by La Rochefoucauld's morals, and reach the conclusion that it is too naïve to rack one's brain to explain, by the life and character of the author, a philosophy which was common to a whole salon. On another hand, when we see La Rochefoucauld in edition after edition attenuating and softening his theory of self-love (or, to put it otherwise, renouncing it), we are left to think that he did not hold to it, and that it is useless to indulge in fine reasoning or virtuous eloquence to refute a philosopher who had already changed his mind.

(1) This first edition included 316 maxims. — In the second (1666), several maxims were suppressed, and only 302 remain. — In 1671, third edition, 341 maxims. In 1675, fourth edition, 413 maxims. The last edition revised by the author, the fifth, contains 504 maxims. It is the text of 1678 which is generally reprinted; it is founded upon *Réflexions diverses*, of which a few had already appeared in 1731, after a MS. preserved by the La Rochefoucauld family at the château of the Rocheguyon.

But, since La Rochefoucauld's name remains attached to a system whose grounds and precepts he has formulated better than anybody else, we should briefly set it forth and consider it, not forgetting that its real expression must be sought in the first edition.

The substance of this system is summed up in maxim 171: "Our virtues lose themselves in selfishness, as rivers are lost in the sea."—And the following are several applications: "The moderation of happy people arises from the repose of their honour assured by good fortune."—No. 78: "Love of justice is only the fear of suffering injustice."—No. 122: "If we conquer our passions, it is more because of their weakness than of our strength."—No. 138: "One prefers speaking ill of oneself, than not to speak of oneself at all."—No 149: "The rejection of praise is the desire to be praised twice."—No. 200:

"Virtue would not go so far, if vanity did not bear it company (2)."—No. 248: "Magnanimity disdains everything in order to have everything..." In short, what the world, what we ourselves, mistake for virtues are but vices in disg-

(2) This maxim has been commented in *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 441.



THE FASHIONABLE MARRIAGE

From a satirical print of the XVII century.

wise: *amour-propre*, in the sense of self-love, deceives us as to the motives of our actions (3).

This self-love is what Spinoza called later on "The tendency of the being to persevere in being." It is a condition of our physical and moral existence. And, whatever we may do, this law is fatal: it is to the moral man what gravity or attraction is in the physical world, it creates social equilibrium. But must we then end in determinism, the absence of all liberty, or the legitimacy of brute egoism? This would be an extreme conclusion; for we may reason thus:—a) Nothing would sooner destroy the equilibrium of society than the liberation of egoism. Virtue, in the sense of self-sacrifice, is a necessary element, one of the two forces which uphold the moral world.—b) To deny that virtue exists, is to deny a fact. But it is never absolute, nor pure. It cannot be, because we are limited beings, and at the same time beings who desire to live, and cannot entirely renounce this desire or this need.—c) What is the nature, then, of human virtue? It enters, more or less, into our motives of action, and that will suffice to endow us with some merit, because an effort towards self-conquest is necessary when we abandon even the least bit of our naturally egoistical inclinations.—d) La Rochefoucauld, then, reasons wittily but neither wisely nor deeply when he unmasks vices to explain our pretended virtues. The true duty of the moralist would rather be to teach us the degree of virtue that enters into such and such of our actions, and what we should do to rise from an inferior to a superior degree. He could seek to set a value upon virtue and vice, to divide them into portions, so to speak; and moral chemistry of this kind would be instructive.—e) Especially should he have taught us how to establish a hierarchy among our motives. When he wrote, "*La vertu n'irait pas si loin si la vanité ne lui tenait compagnie*," what did he understand by vanity? Is it the inner satisfaction which virtue gives us? In a child, is it the desire to please his teachers? In a soldier, the desire to please his chiefs, or to be rewarded? In a lady asking alms for the poor, is it the satisfaction of exhibiting herself in public? You will agree that these are all very different motives. Some of them are paltry; others include, all the same, some self-sacrifice, since the child must work, the soldier must expose his life to danger, etc. So that the right lesson to give men is perhaps to say to them: "Your nature is so limited, that you would not know how to be virtuous without motives. But at least, weigh all your motives of action, and choose those which require some sacrifice of you."

Thus, La Rochefoucauld's philosophy is rather limited and superficial. It instructs us very well in unmasking others, but gives us no rule of conduct. Still, it teaches us something, and we shall now see in what lies its utility. Most moralists analyse our vices; now, we know very well that evil is evil, and that we must avoid it. La Rochefoucauld addresses himself to those among us who

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 466; 2nd cycle, p. 447.



believe themselves virtuous; and he says to them, "You imagine that you practice mercy, moderation, charity, etc. But search your own depths. Ask yourselves why, under what influences and for whom you practise virtue. You will discover in your hearts some shabby and shameful reasons." And that is the great service La Rochefoucauld can render us. He compels us to be sincere with ourselves; to make a scrupulous examination of our consciences, and to blush for our disguised vices. He attacks our *hypocrisy* as a Christian and a Jansenist might do. Perhaps one does not often enough remember that Mme de Sablé's salon had one door leading to Port-Royal, and that the excessive severity of the marquise and her friends resembled very much that of Saint-Cyran or of Pascal.

**La Rochefoucauld's Art.** — But if La Rochefoucauld did nothing more than accept a philosophy common to all Mme de Sablé's guests, he was the only one who knew how to give it a definitive setting. He was born a great writer, which nothing proves more clearly than the successive editions of the same maxims; sometimes it is only in the fifth edition that he attains the exquisite and concise form which alone gives us full satisfaction (1). His intention, sometimes too visible perhaps, was to *balance* exactly his maxim, to give it the strength of an antithesis, or the charm of a paradox. His ideal was to be clear, and at the same time to oblige his reader to reflect, and he nearly always realised it. Nothing is more firm, more plain, more *limpid* than a maxim of La Rochefoucauld; but, after the first satisfaction given by this clarity, comes a healthful anxiety in the mind which devines the number of reflections, examples, objections contained in this tranquil statement. La Rochefoucauld's process may be imitated, but rarely has anyone attained the concision of which he kept the secret.

### III. — LA BRUYÈRE (1645-1696).

**Biography.** — Though we know but little of La Bruyère's life, it is probable that we know all. He was born in Paris, in 1645, in the *Cité*. Son of a Comptroller-general of the City Funds, he became, after having studied law at the University of Orléans, an advocate to the Paris *Parlement*. In 1673 he bought an office as Treasurer of Finances in the *généralité* of Caen; but continued to reside in Paris, living the life of a *philosopher*, until 1686. He depicted himself as "living in the solitude of his study", reading Plato. Comparing himself to Ctésiphon, the man of affairs who lets no one see him, he says... "Come in, all the doors are open to you : there are in my antechamber no weary people waiting for me;

(1) Read examples of re-written maxim in *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 442.

come close to me without warning... The man of letters is nothing more than a boundary stone at the street-corners (1)...” A contemporary of La Bruyère's, who did not like him, the carthusian Bonaventure d'Argonne, makes this commentary on the passage... “It must be admitted that, without supposing either an antichamber or study, it was very easy to approach M. de La Bruyère all by oneself. Before he had an apartment in the hôtel of Condé, there was only one door to open, and the one room was near the sky, divided in two by a light tapestry. The wind, always a good servant to the philosopher, preceding an arrival, and returning with the movement of the door, would skilfully lift the tapestry and reveal the philosopher, with a smiling face, very glad to distill the elixir of his meditations into the minds and hearts of company.”

In 1684 the *philosopher*, who was a friend of Bossuet, was introduced by the latter to the Condé family, and became tutor to the young Duke de Bourbon, grandson of the Great Condé, a young man of sixteen. La Bruyère taught him history, geography and French institutions for more than two years. It is improbable that he would have stayed longer, even if the education of the young man had been prolonged, as the Duke had defects of his family, pride and brutality, and never won any battle of Rocroy.

Soon liberated from this ungrateful task—which he had fulfilled, however, to the satisfaction of the family and of Bossuet—La Bruyère stayed at Chantilly as gentilhomme to the Duke. Here he had leisure which he employed in observing and writing. He often went to Paris, to see the new books, at Michallet's book shop. One day he drew a MS. from his pocket, and said to the bookseller: “Will you take this?... I do not know if you will make anything out of it or not; but in case it succeeds, the profits shall go to my little friend.” This little friend was the daughter of the bookseller, a child; and the MS. was that of the *Caractères*. The first edition appeared in 1688, and was followed by several others; and the bookseller made so much profit that Mlle Michallet had later on a fine dowry and married M. de Juilly.

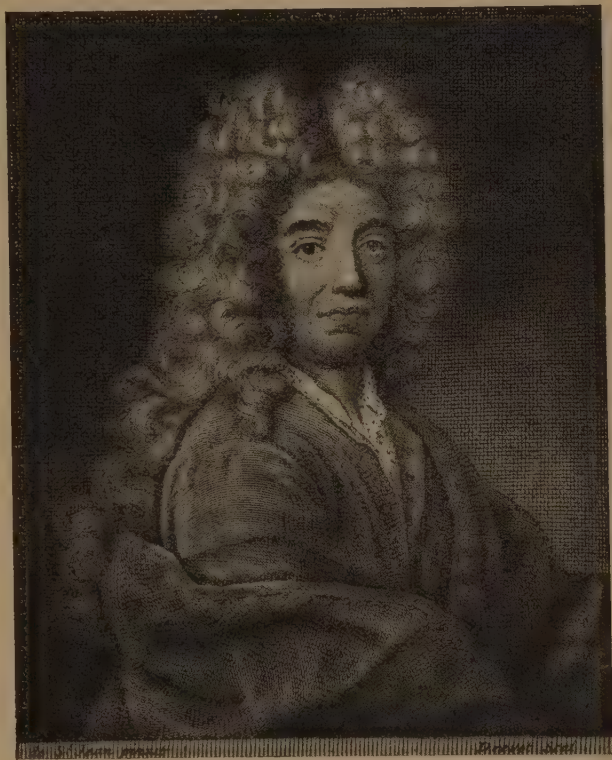
The success of the *Caractères* drew to La Bruyère, as M. de Malézieu had predicted, “many friends and many enemies.” La Bruyère presented himself at the French Academy in 1694, and was not elected; but two years later he succeeded, and his speech made a sensation (2). He was preparing the ninth edition of his *Caractères*, and was working—it is said under Bossuet's inspiration—on some *Dialogues sur le quietisme*, when he died suddenly at Versailles on May 11, 1696.

**His Character.** — La Bruyère was highly esteemed by his contemporaries (with the exception of course of his literary enemies) for his kindness and amia-

(1) *LES CARACTÈRES*, chap. vi. *Des Biens de fortune*.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 465.

bility. Saint-Simon says of him : " He was a very kind man, and very good company; unaffected, with nothing of the pedant in him, and extremely disinterested. " Abbé d'Olivet, in his *Histoire de l'Académie française*, also writes : " He has been described to me as a philosopher who only wished to live in tranquillity with his friends and his books, making a good choice of both; neither seeking nor avoiding pleasure; always ready for reasonable happiness and ingenious in creating it; polite in his manners and wise in his discourse; and fearing every sort of ambition, even that of seeming to be intellectual. " It has been pointed out that this last remark is incorrect, but Olivet was speaking of the man and not of the author.—It must be admitted that, judging La Bruyère by his book, he must have been somewhat misanthropic.



LA BRUYÈRE

From the portrait painted by Saint-Jean and engraved by Drevet.

#### Editions of the " *Caractères*. " —

The first edition, which appeared in 1688, bore the title : *Les Caractères de Théophraste, traduits du grec, avec les Caractères ou les Mœurs de ce siècle*. The first edition which was twice reprinted in that same year, contained many moral maxims and very few portraits. But the fourth edition, in 1689, included a large number of additions, and in fact, from the first edition until the eighth the number of articles increased from 420 to 1,130. The ninth edition is now

considered as the definitive *text* of La Bruyère; it was in process of printing at the time of his death, and appeared in 1696.

**La Bruyère as Translator of Theophrastus.**—Theophrastus, behind whom La Bruyère at first so modestly concealed himself, was a Greek philosopher of the fourth century B.C., a disciple and continuator of Aristotle. His name was but a nickname due to his incomparable eloquence (*who speaks like a God*). At any rate, he was renowned. We possess fragments of his important works (on the natural sciences), and a collection of thirty *portraits* or *characters* (*the Impertinent Person, the Good-natured Man, the Great Talker, etc.*). These La Bruyère translated from a defective text and without much exactitude, so that there are contradictions in his work; and the style has not that picturesque precision we admire in his own original works. But there is no doubt that this translation, which betrays effort, and which La Bruyère perhaps undertook “*pour l’amour du grec*,” in the solitude of his philosophic cell, led him to observe in his turn the manners of his age. The title of his first edition is not only expressive of his cleverness as an author; it shows also the road he followed to become an original writer.

**The Composition in “*les Caractères*.”**—La Bruyère’s *Les Caractères* comprises sixteen chapters: *Des Ouvrages de l’Esprit*; II, *Du Mérite personnel*; III, *Des Femmes*; IV, *Du Cœur*; V, *De la Société et de la Conversation*; VI, *Des Biens de fortune*; VII, *De la Ville*; VIII, *De la Cour*; IX, *Des Grands*; X, *Du Souverain ou de la République*; XI, *De l’Homme*; XII, *Des Jugements*; XIII, *De la Mode*; XIV, *De quelques Usages*; XV, *De la Chaire*; XVI, *Des Esprits forts*.—Whatever good will or subtlety we bring to the task, it is impossible to find any sequence in this nomenclature; though there is perhaps some gradation in chapters VII, VIII, IX, X, in which the absurdities of the city, of the court, of great personages are followed by a chapter on the sovereign.—But though there is no link between the chapters, La Bruyère only grouping under general titles, according to their kind, the numerous notes he had accumulated, it is perhaps true that his last chapter, *Les Esprits forts*, was the crowning point of the entire work. At least, that is what he says in the *Préface* to his *Discours à l’Académie française*: “Of the sixteen chapters which compose it (this book), there are fifteen which, being devoted to the exposure of all that is false and absurd in the objects of human affections and passions, tend to destroy every obstacle which first weakens and afterwards effaces men’s knowledge of God; and in this respect, they are preparatory of the sixteenth and last chapter in which atheism is attacked and perhaps confounded...” “It has been truly pointed out that La Bruyère only decided to reveal this plan in the eighth edition of his book, and in a *Preface* in which he replies to his enemies. For ourselves, although the chapter on *Des Esprits forts* appears indeed to be a sort of conclusion, in so far as La Bruyère



having sought to correct in his reader all the faults which are blameworthy in his relation to his fellow beings now penetrates into his heart, and attacks his more serious errors, yet it does not seem to us that the first fifteen chapters prepare us for the sixteenth.

Furthermore, if we examine any chapter separately, we find in it even less order. But here La Bruyère must be distinguished from Montaigne. The latter discusses, with apparent method, some subject such as death, courage, vanity, but deviates, introducing digression after digression, and sometimes dropping his theme altogether. La Bruyère is less deceptive. If his paragraphs are not positively connected, at least his chapter only includes what logically belongs to its general title.

This absence of order in each chapter and in the book, is entirely intentional. The society for which La Bruyère wrote was

no longer the same which the *Essais* of Nicole inspired with enthusiasm. The author knew what disdain these "honnêtes gens" whom he had heard talking at Chantilly, might have for a tiresome book.—Had they not been called "the reef of bad books?" As a moralist, he would know how to win readers by avoiding a didactic and doctoral tone. His *Caractères* must be one of those books we may open at any page, which begin anywhere and end nowhere, of which one reads a page or ten lines in a moment of leisure, which, on returning from a walk, one finds open on the dressing-table, like a box of sweetmeats one eats one by one, without needing either a large appetite or an excellent digestion.



THE GREAT CONDÉ, IN 1662

From the print engraved by Robert Nanteuil (1623-1678)

**La Bruyère as Painter of "Portraits."** — La Bruyère excelled in the *portrait*.—"I return to the public that which it has lent me," he says. He observed and noted, and afterwards combined scattered traits to form *Caractères*. As we have said above, the "portrait" was nothing new. But in reading some of those contained in the *Galerie* of Mlle de Montpensier, or those inserted in *Le Grand Cyrus*, we are struck by their length and the monotony of the process, whereas in La Bruyère's work every point is weighed, and chosen, and has significance; there is not one statement which is not pointed, and not a whole which is not well composed. Sometimes it is the *caractère*, made of minute observations, in which the author interpolates his moral reflections: "What can be done with *Hégésippe* who demands employment?" (chap. II). Or "*Ménippe* is the bird clothed in various plumage..." (chap. II), or *Chrysispe*, or *Ergaste* (chap. VI). Sometimes the *individual* seems to present himself to us, with his own costume, actions, his manner of speaking, such as *Arrias* (1), *Théodecte*, *Hermagoras*, *Cydias* (chap. V), *Théodecte* (chap. VIII), *Le Fleuriste* (2), *L'Amateur de fruits* (3) (chap. XIII), etc.; and sometimes these portraits make themselves into pendants, as *Giton*, *le riche*, and *Phédon*, *le pauvre* (chap. VI) (4). Sometimes La Bruyère questions his model: *Acis* (Que dites-vous? Comment? Je n'y suis pas...) (chap. V); *Théobalde* (Je le sais, Théobalde, vous êtes vieilli...) (chap. V); *Zénobie* (chap. VI); *Ctésiphon* (chap. VI), etc. But it would require pages merely to enumerate all the types of *portraits* (5).—Examine, also, the variety of details and their precision. The florist is wonderfully designed, while posing immovable before his tulips. The actions of the plum-lover are analysed as if to instruct an actor how to perform his part: "He leads you to the tree, plucks, with the care of an artist, an exquisite plum, opens it, gives you half and himself takes the other... Whereupon his nostrils dilate, and he hides his joy with difficulty under an assumed modesty..." "It is the same with *Cydias*, *Giton* and *Phédon*."

A reading of these characterizations and portraits, at once so individual and so general, shows that La Bruyère's contemporaries were wrong in believing that he drew them exactly from living originals, but were right all the same in publishing keys. La Bruyère protested against these identifications in the Preface to the *Caractères*, and in that to his *Discours à l'Académie* (1). At heart he was pleased, as nothing could prove better the truth of his painting. Though public malignity only was guilty of these personalities, yet it must be added that in some cases La Bruyère indicated very clearly, by certain features, if not

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 167.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 171.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 452 (passage commenté).

(4) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 461.

(5) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 168; 2nd cycle, p. 463.

(6) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 454.

the unique model at least the most important one. Thus Irène, in chapter xi, is certainly Mme de Montespan; Émile, in chapter ii, is the Great Condé; Cydias, in chapter v, is Fontenelle; Pamphile, in chapter x, is Dangeau, etc.

**His Philosophy and Moral stand point.** — La Bruyère had not, like La



A BALL AT THE COURT OF LOUIS XIV

From a print engraved by Jean Lepautre (1618-1682).

This Ball was given by the King in 1664, at the fêtes of the *Plaisirs de l'Île enchantée*, for which Molière composed *Le Mariage Forcé* and *La Princesse d'Élide*.

Rochefoucauld, a system by which to test all his observations. To some this seems an inferiority; but others including ourselves, consider that in this he showed superior intelligence. To scorn humanity altogether, no matter how great the literary beauty in which the scorn is clothed, is proof of a limited experience or of a narrow mind,—and generally of both. To define and unravel in human actions good, evil and the ridiculous too, requires more perspicacity. Above all, to avoid too positive affirmations, to seek to please and instruct only by a patient and honest search for truth, is the right course for a moralist who thinks less of his own reputation than of the welfare of his readers.

Now, though La Bruyère is a painter, as we have seen, he is more than anything else a *moralist*. "One should not speak," he says in his *Preface*, "nor write except to instruct." And in his first chapter he is even more explicit: "The philosopher passes his life in observing men, and in disengaging their vices and absurdities; if he expresses his thoughts tolerably, it is not because of the vanity of an author, but to place truth in a clear light, and make the impression necessary to carry out his plan. A few readers think, nevertheless, that they have repaid him with usury if they say arrogantly they have read his book, and that he possesses some wit; but he returns them all their praises, which he has not sought by his labour and watches; his object is more important, he aims at a higher result; he demands of men a greater and rarer success than their praises and even rewards, which is to make them better." And how did La Bruyère make men better? His philosophy is both social and christian, being founded upon solidarity, the respect we should have for the rights and needs of others; upon charity, to the extent of sacrificing our interest and selfishness to the good of our neighbour; upon the realisation of our duties to the State which would lead us to fulfill them scrupulously, instead of merely finding in them a satisfaction for our vanity.—La Bruyère, who in some respects announced the eighteenth century, was not one of those who charge on society the faults and vices of man; in his opinion, man can and should better himself, and social corruption is only the sum of individual corruption. In this regard he is truly Christian, as Nicole and Bourdaloue were.

In addition to this his feelings are those of a gentle and virtuous man. He talks of friendship, love, pity, the poor, as a man who, without being a dupe, believes in faithfulness and goodness.

**La Bruyère as Precursor of the Eighteenth Century.**—But this intelligent moralist who could write: "A man who is born a Christian and a Frenchman, feels himself constrained in the use of satire: great subjects are forbidden him," was himself a satirist as bold as he was clairvoyant. When we read, in particular, his chapters entitled *Des Biens de Fortune*, *De la Cour*, *Des Grands*, *De l'Homme*, we are almost astonished that a seventeenth century writer could have expressed himself so severely not only concerning financiers, but even concerning the nobility, nay, concerning the institutions of the country.—Those whom he designates by the letters P. T. S. (*partisans*) the farmers-general, who made scandalous fortunes, were for him "abominable souls, covered with mud and filth;" and his eloquent outburst: "Flee... take yourself off... I perceive upon the earth an avid, insatiable man..." was sincere. It may be said that financiers were universally scorned; but read this: "If the financier misses his aim, the courtiers say of him that he is a bourgeois, a nobody, an upstart; if he succeeds, they ask his daughter in marriage (1)." Remember

(1) Chap. vi, *Des Biens de fortune*.



too, the celebrated witticism of Mme de Grignan on the marriage of her son (1). People of position he judges to be useless, lazy, evil-doers; comparing them with the people, he declares he would rather be of the people. He reproaches them with neglecting the affairs of the State. In reading his chapter on *Les Grands*, and connecting it with Molière's raillery and Bourdaloue's severities, we realise with how much freedom Louis XIV allowed writers to discredit the



CHANTILLY IN THE XVII CENTURY

From the print engraved by Aveline

*Today, there exists only the left part of this old castle, called the Capitainerie, built by Jean Bulland in the XVI century.*

nobility. Furthermore, La Bruyère protested with irritated or pathetic eloquence against inequalities in station and fortune (chap. vi), and he drew a celebrated picture of the misery of peasants (chap. x).

Perhaps in all these passages there is some personal rancour. It is evident that La Bruyère, a man of noble soul and distinguished intellect, felt his dependent position among people of rank. But this feeling would not have sufficed to arouse the indignation and violence of his attacks upon financiers, magistrates and lawyers, and soldiers. Already influenced by new ideas, this moralist is frequently transformed into a pamphleteer. Between the *Grands* of

(1) Cf. p. 426.

La Bruyère and Beaumarchais's *Le Mariage de Figaro* there is only a difference of literary presentment.

**La Bruyère as Writer.**—The reason why the *Caractères* gave such pleasure, and has survived many other books which also taught useful lessons, is because it is the work of a genuine artist. La Bruyère knew, like La Rochefoucauld, though with less striking conciseness, how to formulate short, antithetical, paradoxical maxims. "There is nothing so refreshing as to have known how to avoid a silly action" (chap. xi). "It is a great misfortune to lack sufficient wit to talk well, or sufficient judgment to keep silent" (chap. v). And his metaphors and comparisons are more picturesque than La Rochefoucauld's: "Diamonds and pearls are the rarest things in the world—except a spirit of discernment" (chap. xii). "It is a pleasure to meet the eyes of someone to whom one has just made a gift" (chap. iv).—He often indulges in moral dissertations, in which he tersely defines every shade of a sentiment or an absurdity. See in chapter v: "There is such a thing as good speaking, easy speaking, true speaking, appropriate speaking, etc." "Spurious greatness is haughty and inaccessible..." (chap. ii).—And in the portraits, whose variety we have indicated, he makes use of the most extensive vocabulary and the most supple syntax.

All critics agree as to the propriety, the always felicitous unexpectedness, and the picturesqueness of his style, but all have pointed out in it a certain effort. La Bruyère is a stylist; he did not seek like Bossuet or Mme de Sévigné merely to express what he felt, but wished to heighten his subject by form.

He succeeded only too well. The real solidity and truth of his thought would be better appreciated by the reader if these artificialities of style did not distract his attention—a just punishment for the author's "coquetry."

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DECORATIVE FRIEZE BY JEAN LEPAUTRE (1618-1682).

## CHAPTER VIII.

### LETTERS. MEMOIRS. NOVELS.

#### SUMMARY

1° **LETTERS** are not, properly speaking, **literary** works. They are the more valuable if they have been written without pretention; and to merit preservation, they must possess both historical and psychological interest.

2° Favourable conditions in the seventeenth century produced numbers of witty or profound letters: the guests of the salons were given to moral analysis; novels, sermons, dramas were **psychological**; court life fascinated people in the provinces, who wished to be informed of the slightest details, etc. Interesting letters were written by all the great writers (Racine, Boileau, Bossuet, etc.), by the secondary writers (Saint-Evremond, Patru, Maudcroix, etc.), and especially by women (Mme de Sablé, Mme de La Fayette, etc.).

3° **Mme DE SÉVIGNÉ** (1626-1696), who became a widow when very young, **idolised** her daughter, Mme de Grignan, with whom she carried on a continuous correspondence. These letters are valuable for the picture they present of the time, of **society**, of the soul and **sentiments** of Mme de Sévigné, and for their **criticisms** of contemporary authors. Their style is both natural and fashionable.—Among Mme de Sévigné's friends were **BUSSY-RABUTIN**, **Mme DE LA FAYETTE** and **COULANGES**, etc.

4° **Mme DE MAINTENON** (1635-1719), who was at first Mme Scarron, became governess to the children of Mme de Montespan, and finally wife of Louis XIV. Her great work was the foundation and administration of **Saint-Cyr**, a convent intended for poor young girls belonging to the nobility. At first their education was too worldly, but a reform followed. Mme de Maintenon lavished **instructions** and **lessons** on the scholars and the teachers, which have been published under the title of **Lettr. s et entretiens sur l'éducation**.—The dominant quality in Mme de Maintenon was reason.

5° MEMOIRS.—The most celebrated are those of *Mme DE MÔTTEVILLE* concerning Anne d'Autriche,—of Cardinal *DE RETZ* about the Fronde,—and of *SAINT-SIMON* (1675-1755), who wrote towards the end of Louis XIV's reign. Saint-Simon was an impassioned and partial witness, too much disposed to believe evil, but a powerful and picturesque writer.

6° NOVELS.—*HONORÉ D'URFÉ* published, from 1610 to 1627, *l'Astrée*, a pastoral novel, of over-refined psychology; *LA CALPRENÈDE* published novels of adventure (*Cassandre*, *Cléopâtre*); *Mlle DE SCUDÉRY* wrote heroic and "précieux" novels, in which she depicted contemporary society under ancient names (*Cyrus*, *Clélie*);—in the realistic genre, *SCARRON* wrote *Le Roman comique*; and *FURETIÈRE*, *Le Roman bourgeois*.—Finally, in 1677, *Mme DE LA FAYETTE* published, under the name of Segrais, *La Princesse de Clèves*, a masterpiece of moral delicacy and of style.—*CHARLES PERRAULT* published in 1697 the *Contes*, borrowed from folk-lore, but to which he had the good fortune to give definitive form.

## I. — EPISTOLARY LITERATURE.



DECORATED LETTER

by Abraham Bosse (1602-1676).

ALL the works which we have thus far studied were written with regard to readers, spectators, or auditors, and belonged—even those of a Pascal or a Bossuet,—to literature. We come at present to letters, no longer intended, like those of Voiture and Balzac, for a wide circle and for print, but of an intimate nature and such as those we scrawl or receive daily. A number of these letters have given their authors a place in the history of literature.

However, we must guard against the belief that letters are in themselves a *genre*, or that they can be ruled by laws. The value of the letter depends upon the value of the individual; and it is sometimes in letters that we may feel all the moral value, all the sensibility, of a person who may be ordinarily cold and uninteresting—as well as the emptiness and futility of those who appear to be affectionate and witty. Conversation, with its endless resources of expression and gesture, may deceive; but in a letter there is only the deeper charm and the inner motive.

Above all others, the letters of women are paramount.

Women excel in writing letters as they excel in talking. Less restrained and less suspicious than men, they like to communicate to others what they think and feel. Their thoughts and emotions are spontaneous and fugitive and they must note them the moment they appear, so as to fix the shade of their mean-



ing. A woman who wishes to write well should write her impression the moment she feels it. She would be wrong to put off a letter of condolence or of congratulation; if she has felt nothing touching or lovable the instant her heart is in vibration, she will find nothing better the day after.

It has been said that our life to-day creates very unfavourable conditions for letter-writing. We meet more easily and more often than in the time of stage-coaches; we correspond more quickly. In the seventeenth century it took a letter five days to go from Paris to Marseilles, and there were but two posts a week; from Brittany to Provence it took ten days, with only one post a week. With what impatience the "ordinaire" was awaited, and what excitement, before the departure of the post, over a letter that must be made sufficiently interesting! It is very doubtful if the railroad, the rapidity of communications, the invention of the telegraph have diminished the number and the quality of letters. That is a rumor circulated by those who write insipid letters, or none at all; and those same people, in the seventeenth century, would have justified by contrary reasons their laziness or lack of wit. Surely, we can no longer relate in our letters dated from Paris all that Mme de Sévigné wrote about, as the newspapers tell everything that happens, and even more. But our private life, our family circle, our friends are not yet, I fancy, the prey of the reporters, and our minds are still capable of judgment, our hearts capable of feeling. Friends are still separated, and love each other from afar, precious relations are cultivated, we describe our travels, our misfortunes and disappointments. What matters it though the postman pass every day? At the moment when I write, I am a human being with all my experiences to relate, and all the progress of science can never change that.

Generally, of course, correspondence is not published. How many letters are immediately burned or torn up; how many lose their interest when those who wrote or received them have disappeared!—Several circumstances are necessary for a correspondence to be piously preserved and published: the author must have occupied a sufficiently important place in the society of his time, his letters must serve in some way to complete history; it is also necessary that the vividness and depth of the author's sentiments should be such as to make his letters valuable as human documents as they are valuable in the historical sense.

## II. — LETTERS IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

**Social Conditions which favour Epistolary Art.** — The progress of social life inevitably strengthens the writing mania. In proportion as people appreciate clever conversation, they also wish to appear at their best in their letters. If one has made, in the Paris salons, a reputation for wit, one fears the danger

of writing a careless letter which, on being shown, might injure that renown. On the contrary, a witty letter would make one talked about.

This desire, however, arising merely from vanity, might spoil the naturalness of the letter, and there are better reasons. Polite society refines sentiments as well as manners. Discussions and researches about the most subtle gradations of love, of friendship, of jealousy, etc., resulted not only in the amorous metaphysics of the novels, and the psychology of the maxims and portraits but gave, especially to women, the taste for and the method of personal analysis. Letters were to be written, less for the purpose of recounting events in the city and at court, than to express one's thoughts subtly and to depict states of mind. The reading of novels like *L'Astrée* and *Le Grand Cyrus*, or of moral and theological works, the hearing of sermons, and of dramas in which psychology held such a large place, all contributed to give letters the character of intimate truth.

On the other hand, these fine gentlemen and ladies, if they were not in Paris, did not wish to lose contact with the city and the court, or, if they remained at Paris or Versailles, did not wish to be without news from the provinces. There were no newspapers to supplement their not seeing things for themselves, or to supply them with news retailed in the *best-informed circles*. Consequently, they would write "everything which happened;" and these letters so curious for their psychological analyses, are also incomparable historical documents.

**A few celebrated Letter-writers.** — We cannot consider here all the *correspondences* of the seventeenth century which have been published. But it is well to know how numerous in those days were the collections of letters, outside those of Mme de Sévigné:—and we shall speak only of letters worthy of study from the triple point of view of history, psychology and style.

First, nearly all the great writers left letters in which we are pleasantly surprised to discover the man instead of the author. We have already noted those of *Racine*, of *Boileau*, of *Bossuet*, etc. But, writers of the second or third order are often better in their letters than in their works: for instance, *Saint-Evremond*, *Patru*, *Maucroix*, *Guy-Patin*, etc. It was especially in the higher ranks of society that really original letter-writers were to be found: Mme de *Montausier* (daughter of Mme de Rambouillet), Mme de *Sablé*, Mme de *Maure*, Mme de *Schomberg* (Mlle de Hautefort), Mme de *Scudéry* (wife of Georges de Scudéry, and not to be confused with her sister-in-law, the author of *Le Grand Cyrus*); Mme de *La Fayette*. And, in order not to confine the list to women, the Marquis de *Feuquières*, the Count de *Guilleragues*, Abbé de *Choisy*, etc. (1).

It is incredible how much wit, delicacy and emotion—and how much curious

(1) Letters by all these personages, accompanied by notices, are found in M. LANSON'S *Choix de lettres du dix-septième siècle*. — We shall speak of BUSSY-RABUTIN à propos of Mme de Sévigné.

information—are found in these *correspondences*. Society, religion, tastes, passions, literary opinions, how the world understood Corneille, Racine, La Fontaine, which works they admired that are now forgotten, and which they did not appreciate that we now admire—all this is found in these daily memoirs. The soul and the thought of a great century live in letters written during that century.

Let us now consider the letters of a few distinguished women who were known to write the best, and who must have really had genius to have risen above so many eminent rivals.

### III. — MADAME DE SEVIGNÉ (1626-1696).

**Biography.** — Marie de Rabutin-Chantal was born at Paris on February 5, 1626. Her grandmother on her father's side was Saint Jeanne of Chantal who renounced the world, founded the Order of the Visitation at Annecy and was canonized. Her mother's name was Marie de Coulanges.—Young Marie de Rabutin lost her father at an early age, he having been killed in 1627 in a fight with the English; and six years later she lost her mother. She was then confided to her maternal grandparents, M. and Mme de Coulanges; but the latter—and soon afterwards her husband—dying too, the care of the child passed to their second son, Abbé de Coulanges, whom she has called *le Bien Bon*. The Abbé, who lived at Livry, took very seriously the education of his ward. He gave her the best masters, among others Chapelain, who was an eminent critic, and Ménage who “savait du grec autant qu’homme de France.” But it was Latin that Ménage taught his pupil, and taught well, along with Spanish and Italian. We gather from Mme de Sévigné's letters that she read these three languages easily.

In 1644 she married the Marquis Henri de Sévigné, a relative of Paul de Gondi, Cardinal de Retz. This marriage, perfect from the point of view of alliance and fortune, was not happy. The Marquis was a gamester and a bully. He began by ruining his wife, and was killed in a duel by the Chevalier d'Albret in 1651. Mme de Sévigné, “who loved but did not esteem him,” wept for him but without regret. She had two children, a daughter born in 1646, and a son born in 1648. By the advice of Abbé de Coulanges, she first devoted herself to setting her affairs in order, which had been so compromised by her husband, and passing several years on her estate of Les Rochers, near Vitré, she succeeded in restoring her children's patrimony.

In 1654 Mme de Sévigné returned to Paris, and again frequented society. She was one of the most illustrious *précieuses* at the Hôtel de Rambouillet and all the other aristocratic salons. But she made frequent journeys to Brittany, and occupied herself personally in the education of her children. She taught her daughter Italian and Latin, and engaged the Abbé de la Mousse to

give her lessons in philosophy, which inspired her with a perhaps exaggerated taste for Descartes. When Mlle de Sévigné was old enough, her mother presented her at court. "*La plus jolie fille de France*," as Bussy-Rabutin called her, was a very eligible person, and did not lack suitors. But her mother, and the *Bien Bon*, were anxious to spare her the cruel disappointments of a too hasty marriage. The successful suitor was the Count de Grignan. Mlle de Sévigné was twenty-three years old, he was forty and had twice been left a widower. "All his wives have died," wrote Mme de Sévigné to Bussy, "to give way to your cousin." His first wife had been Angélique de Rambouillet, younger daughter of the incomparable Arthénice.

Married in 1669, Mme de Grignan had to rejoin her husband in 1674, as he had been appointed lieutenant-general of Provence. The separation from her mother was painful, as Mme de Sévigné idolised her daughter; and to this fact and this infatuation we owe the greater part and the most vital of the Marquise's letters.—Furthermore, she loved her son no less, and Charles de Sévigné's heart was warmer and his temperament more expansive than that of his sister (1). He was a brave soldier, took part in several campaigns, and ended by retiring to Brittany. He was somewhat extravagant, and his mother often complained of his perpetual need of money. The Grignan household also caused her frequent anxiety in the same respect. They lived too extravagantly. Trained herself by the common sense of the Abbé de Coulanges, Mme de Sévigné's letters overflow with advice to her daughter. She concerns herself, with as much intelligence as affection, in the upbringing of her grandchildren. Mme de Grignan had three children: Marie-Blanche, whom Mme de Sévigné called "*ses petites entrailles*," and whom she kept with her at Paris for three years—she was sacrificed to the interests of the other two children by being placed at the age of six in the Convent of the Visitation of Aix, which she never left afterwards; —Pauline, who is often mentioned in the Letters, and who became Mme de Simiane; —and Louis-Provence, *le petit marquis*, who became a good officer, and whom his mother married in 1694 to the daughter of a Farmer-general... "*Il faut bien fumer ses terres*."

Mme de Sévigné, who often received her daughter and grandchildren at Paris, also visited them at Grignan. It was in April, 1696, at their château, that she was attacked by small-pox and died.

**Character.**—All contemporary witnesses agree in describing Mme de Sévigné as a woman as amiable as she was virtuous. From her father, the Baron de Rabutin-Chantal, she inherited a *gaiety* which overcame all her troubles, and which animated her style; and from the Coulanges, inexhaustible kindness, mingled with a practical business sense which was developed by her guardian.

(1) See her letter to Mme de Grignan, of August 8, 1696 (*Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 207).



Bussy, to whom she had refused to loan money, drew a satirical portrait of her, in which he accused her of avarice, and which she generously forgave. It has been questioned whether she possessed much heart, and whether all her qualities were not rather those of the head. It is true that she had so much wit that even sentiment did not rob her of it; and that sometimes a certain persiflage on serious or painful subjects may surprise us. But let us avoid injustice.

A courageous friend of Fouquet, a devoted mother, a tender and attentive grandmother, it was also she who wrote *letters* on the death of Turenne and Louvois as fine as Bossuet's funeral orations. It is possible that some of her badinage was intended, not so much to express her own sentiments, as to divert at any price her phlegmatic daughter. A consecutive reading of her letters gives the impression of an excellent woman, but one in whom the "brain is never the dupe of the heart."



MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ

From the portrait painted by Lefèvre and engraved by Pelletier.

### Publication of her Correspondence.—

During her lifetime Mme de Sévigné was renowned as a letter-writer. Her letters were sometimes copied before the departure of the post, were read in society and passed from hand to

hand : such as her letter about the Horse and the letter about the hay-field. From 1697, the Bussy-Rabutin family, in publishing its correspondence, interpolated a certain number of Mme de Sévigné's letters. In 1725 and 1726 editions more or less garbled appeared; and Mme de Simiane, grand-daughter of Mme de Sévigné, decided to entrust to the Chevalier de Perrin the publication of the letters she had preserved. The original text was not entirely respected; in particular, initials were substituted for some of the proper names, and some expressions were toned down. This edition, which appeared from 1734 to 1737, was reprinted in 1754.—In 1818, Monmerqué's new and more complete edition appeared. But the only one in which the text has been restored in accordance with true critical methods, is that of M. Adolphe Régnier, in the *Collection des grands écrivains de la France*.

**Interest of this Correspondence.**—1° *History*.—These Letters have first of all an *historical* interest. From 1655 to 1696, they form a sort of *gazette*, not written by a newsmonger of inferior social status, who hears only from afar the echo of events, and cannot approach prominent people, but by a court lady who lives at the very source of information. It was on leaving le Louvre, Versailles, Saint-Cyr, where the king had spoken to her in person, and the *salons* where she met the greatest ladies of her time, that Mme de Sévigné wrote her letters. Without doubt, she does not explain to us the causes of wars and of treaties; she reveals no secret of Louis XIV's policies. But the exact details she gives of the Fouquet trial, the passage of the Rhine, the marriage of La Grande Mademoiselle, the death of Turenne, the disgrace of Pomponne, the death of Condé and Louvois, etc., are *complementary* to history itself. If the *Mémoires* of Saint-Simon show us what a mind as ill-natured as it was clear-sighted could perceive in the paltry ambitions and shameful calculations at court, we enjoy seeing and hearing all these fine people and finding them rather congenital than otherwise through the medium of Mme de Sévigné. With untiring curiosity, and in a style always vivid, Mme de Sévigné depicts for us costumes, actions, speech, and anecdotes which sometimes reveal more serious emotions (1).

2° *Social Life*.—Gazette of the court, her correspondence is also a chronicle of society. From her we learn of the daily life of people in Paris and in the country; what were their subjects of conversation, how they judged new books, and what plays they saw; how they travelled, and how they drank the waters at Vichy or Bourbon; how a marriage was arranged, an affair conducted, a legal case lost; how they treated equals and inferiors; what a *salon* was, a farm, a meadow, a peasant, a gardener, a valet, a little dog—in short, all that appertains to daily life. And all this was the true revelation made by rapid and sincere impressions day by day, and not by *mémoires* written in order to pose before posterity (2).

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 199; 2nd cycle, p. 470.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 204; 2nd cycle, p. 474.

3° *The history of a Soul.*—But under these anecdotes, this amusing tittle-tattle is a soul, the strong and exquisite soul of a great lady who was also a sincere Christian of the seventeenth century. The amiable virtue of Mme de Sévigné, which betrays itself without vanity, or hypocrisy, rests us after the tragic heroines and buxom comedy ladies. Neither an *Emilie* nor a *Célimène*, she threads her way among this society and lives with it without losing anything of her dignity or her good humour. She judged, with sang-froid, both good and evil, without credulity or prejudice. Read these thousands of letters, and you will not find in them one bit of slander. She will ridicule a toilet or a pose; but never, witty and sarcastic as she was, did she trifle with a reputation. All we have to reproach her with, as we have said, is a tendency to persiflage upon certain subjects, such as the revolt of the Breton peasants, and the Brinvilliers case. But, it should be borne in mind, that these were letters destined for the amusement of her daughter.—This affection for her daughter fills the larger part of the correspondence of a mother who knew how to give an in-



LES ROCHERS

Madame de Sévigné's Castle

finite variety of expression to the same sentiment. This maternal love contains something of idolatry and pride; it may even be that, as society knew of the violence of her sentiments, and awaited with curiosity the new variations upon the theme, Mme de Sévigné indulged in a little virtuosity. On the other hand, the coldness of Mme de Grignan irritated, in a way, her mother's love, and she was led, by her interest in the game, to exaggerate. However this may be, nothing fatigues or repels us in these perpetual repetitions of a love so sincere and so perpetually expressed (1).

4° *Her feeling for Nature.*—This is not all. We learn from her letters the author's tastes: and first of all her feeling for nature. We shall not go so far as

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 203; 2nd cycle, p. 477.



to say that the seventeenth century had no appreciation of nature. Parisians of that time loved the country. Many citizens in easy circumstances had houses in the suburbs; as, for instance, Boileau and La Fontaine at Auteuil. The great lords passed several months each year on their estates. These people, whom we always imagine readily enough in their perruques and lace ruffles, led sometimes the life of country gentlemen, in close contact with the peasants and the animals. The country could not have been at that time merely "literary material," as it became later when society was more imprisoned in worldly artfulness, and when the demands of their professions, and of higher commerce, forced those men who wished to make their fortune to remain in the ever-growing, more populous and more restricted city. Add to this the fashion in poetry, which often changes its themes, and which had now substituted the external world for a worn-out psychology. Let us be sure that the seventeenth century, though it had no morbid love for nature, loved it simply and tranquilly with one of those gentle and profound affections which have no history. We are pleased, all the same, when we come across the expression, in a few authors, of a more lively and especially more *picturesque* sentiment of this kind. Did Mme de Sévigné seek, from motives of vanity, to draw particular effects from various landscapes or from the different seasons, or was it unconsciously that she *distinguished* one from another, and *painted* it? It is sure that she makes us see as she sees, be it Livry, Les Rochers, Le Buron, or the borders of the Allier, and that she is almost alone in her time to perceive the shades of colour in green, red, yellow, and the differences between summer and spring and autumn. Furthermore, she knew, like La Fontaine, how to give herself up to reverie under the tall trees of her mysterious alleys, and she listened to the nightingale's song by moonlight. There again, she is really original. What others felt vaguely, she felt definitely; what others evoked in abstract terms, she painted, and her palette lacked no shade of colour (1).

5° *Criticism*.—Mme de Sévigné was often a *critic* on her own account. We find in her *Lettres*, as in those of most of her contemporaries, reflections upon writers. Here our interest is doubled: we like to know who were her favorite authors, and, on the other hand, enjoy her spontaneous opinion, her *impressions* from reading or hearing, which are valuable testimony as to what an educated and intelligent woman of the seventeenth century would feel at first contact with works which others judged by rule and principle. She had certain very naïve fondnesses for works now gone out of fashion, the novels of Mlle de Scudéry and of La Calprenède; she liked Voiture and Nicole too much; she was charmed by the little verses of Godeau and Benserade. But, also, what a substantial *affection* she had for Corneille, Pascal, Bossuet, Bourdaloue, La Fontaine! and how well she knew how to find happy formulas for expressing her

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 205; 2nd cycle, p. 480.



taste, which “the rusty knowledge of pedants” never finds! At first unjust towards Racine, did she not write the best of *feuilletons* on *Esther* (1)?

**Mme de Sévigné's style.**—Although there are in Mme de Sévigné's style a few traces of a *preciosité* sometimes involuntary, sometimes intentional, the dominant impression is that it is *natural*. In fact, Mme de Sévigné was not a professional writer, and it was not a book which she wrote. She had read widely, no doubt, and was influenced by authors, especially Montaigne and Voiture; but above all she talked wonderfully, and, with her pen in hand, she still talked. Thus she brought to the writing of her letters the same piquant ease and unexpectedness as to her conversation: her style is impulsive.—With this vivacity of expression, she also possessed a gift for seeing and portraying which belonged to few people of her time, and which connects her with La Bruyère and the English novelists of the eighteenth century. We cannot too often repeat that her aim was to amuse her correspondents, and to make them see, by her letters, what was happening far away from them; and from this resulted her search for colour and action, and her art of accumulating, without confusion, so many pleasing details. She took the reader completely into her confidence, and hence these analyses, at once sincere and coquettish, in which we see her exactly as she was, from her smile to the brilliant glance of her eyes (2).

**The Friends and Correspondents of Mme de Sévigné.**—Among her friends and correspondents whose letters we possess, and to whom she so often communicated her own wit and feeling, we should mention:

**Bussy-Rabutin** (1618-1693), her cousin, a type of the nobleman who only lacks the moral sense. Very intelligent, but foppish, exiled from court because of his epigrams, and his *Histoire amoureuse des Gaules*, in which he sketched most of his contemporaries, he left an immense *Correspondance*, published from 1697 to 1704, and *Mémoires*;—**Mme de Grignan** and **Charles de Sévigné**, whose letters occupy a place of honour beside those of their mother: those of the daughter are more elaborate, and show the influence of ideas and philosophy; those of the son are more spontaneous (3);—**Emmanuel de Coulanges**, cousin of the Marquise, and his wife, whose letters are charming;—**Mme de La Fayette**, of whom we shall speak elsewhere;—the **Marquis de Pomponne**, etc. (4).

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 484.

(2) Concerning Mme de Sévigné's style, cf. ÉMILE FAGUET, *Dix-septième siècle*, p. 276.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 207; 2nd cycle, p. 487.

(4) Cf. *Choix de lettres du dix-septième siècle*, by G. LANSON; and F. HÉMON, *Cours de littérature*, Mme de Sévigné, p. 17.

## IV. — MADAME DE MAINTENON (1635-1719).

**Biography.** — Mme de Maintenon was for a long time misunderstood; the judgment upon her was based upon calumnies; and the garbled publication of her letters in the eighteenth century did her a wrong which the sincere work of contemporary criticism has not yet entirely repaired.

Françoise d'Aubigné was born at Niort on November 27, 1635, in a prison. Her mother had refused to be separated from her husband, Constant d'Aubigné, son of the famous soldier and Protestant writer, Agrippa d'Aubigné. Constant had been converted to Catholicism; but in abandoning the religion of his father he should have conserved its traditions of honour and patriotism: now, it was as a traitor to France that he had been arrested and condemned. Being pardoned, he left for Martinique, became governor of the island of Grenade, continued to lead a dissipated life, and died in 1645. His widow returned to France with her three children, and did not long survive her misfortunes. The young Françoise, *la jeune Indienne*, was brought up by Mme de Neuillant. At the age of sixteen they married her to the poet Scarron, a man full of buffoonery but with a tender heart, — a merry cripple, whose *salon* was frequented by all the wits of the time. At twenty-five, a widow without fortune, Mme Scarron was happy to find employment at court, which she entered as governess of Mme de Montespan's children. Her situation was at first a painful one; but she commanded respect by her dignity, and especially her eminent talents as an educator. As a reward, Louis XIV gave her, in 1694, the estate of Maintenon, with the title of marquise. In 1685, after the death of the queen, Marie-Thérèse, the king secretly married her, and he owed to her the moral dignity of his last thirty years. Had she a political influence upon the king? The question is difficult to answer. It is known that Louis XIV liked to consult her, and that he called her "Votre Solidité"; but she seems never to have sought to play any part in affairs of state.

Her great work was the foundation and administration of the institution of Saint-Cyr.

**Saint-Cyr. Mme de Maintenon as Educator.** — She had very early begun to take an interest in the education of poor young girls belonging to the nobility. Having suffered herself, and preserved painful memories of her infancy and youth, she wished to save other young girls of her rank from similar misfortunes. She began by renovating a house at Rueil, directed by Mme de Brinon, and placing there a hundred boarding scholars, to whom the king agreed to give scholarships and when they married, a dowry. Then she founded, in 1684, the Saint-Cyr house, which was intended to receive two hundred and fifty poor and noble pupils, under the same conditions. She herself made the rules and chose the teachers.

At first, the education at Saint-Cyr was too worldly; and the chief preoccupation was to train these girls in fine manners and “beau style.” There were constant receptions, concerts, dramatic representations. The whole court went there. They played *Andromaque*, and much too well, and Mme de Maintenon began to feel some alarm. The profane repertory was given up, and they played *Esther*—but with what success Mme de Sévigné suffices to inform us (1)! Then Mme de Maintenon thought of reforming Saint-Cyr, and to the end of her life gave it her daily attention. She made frequent journeys there, inspected, examined, gave instructions to the pupils and especially to the teachers; and after the king’s death, she went to live there.

As an educator, Mme de Maintenon passed through two phases. At first, she had made a mistake, but in good faith. She counted too much upon the excellence of nature alone, and believed that it was only necessary to develop in these young girls the feeling for beauty and elegance. When she realised her error, she frankly admitted it: “We wished to have cultivated minds,

and we have produced rhetoricians; devotion, and we have made quietists; modesty, and we have made *précieuses*; lofty sentiments, and here we find pride at its height.”—She then applied herself to forming hearts and minds by a direct method, by moral lessons, in order to prepare these fortuneless young aristocrats to become good mothers and wives. Above all, she endeavoured to warn her pupils against all vanities, all illusions, all exaggerations of sentiment. Not only was instruction reduced to its simplest, most practical forms (catechism, history, etc.), but even religion was defended from excesses; they had need of



MADAME DE MAINTENON  
From the print by Giffart.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 484.

"a substantial, simple, gay, gentle and free piety... for it is not a question here of forming nuns." She occupied herself with the question of moral education even more than instruction, and by frequent conversations she sought to endow both scholars and mistresses with a sincerely honest point of view. Every question, even the most delicate, was to be approached *frankly* and *simply*.

We feel the greatest respect, and are truly touched, when we read these conversations of Mme de Maintenon on *La mauvaise Gloire*, on *L'Esprit de cachotterie*, *L'Ennui*, *Les Amitiés*, *L'Indiscrétion*, *La Politesse*, *Le Mariage*, etc. What reason, what moral firmness, what dignified and proud melancholy, and what clear-sightedness (1)!

**Mme de Maintenon's style.**—We must not expect of Mme de Maintenon the same qualities of sprightliness, animation, picturesqueness, even sentiment which enliven Mme de Sévigné's Letters. Her dominant characteristic, as we have said, was *reason*. Therefore, we should expect from her especially clarity and coherence of ideas, the ability to profoundly examine a moral question, and propriety of abstract and pedagogical terms. But it must not be supposed that her style was therefore cold and constrained. In the first place, she always felt great interest, in whatever question she handled; her heart was in her subject, and this sometimes results in genuine warmth of demonstration. Furthermore, her personality often appears in her *Lettres* and her *Entretiens*, and we feel in it a mingling of stoicism and sadness, and a *maternal* interest in the daughters of her mind and heart.

## V. — MÉMOIRS.

Anybody may write his memoirs. In recent times we have seen all kinds of them: memoirs of generals and sergeants, memoirs of duchesses and governesses, memoirs of actors and of hairdressers. All are not interesting, and time alone can judge these publications of extremely unequal value. And so seventeenth century *mémoires*, also very numerous, can now be properly classified and appreciated.

Speaking generally, what is the real value of memoirs, whether written by Philippe de Commines, Mme de Caylus, Saint-Simon or Marbot? It is to complete official history, the history which everybody sees in the making; it is to show, behind the great ornamented and illuminated, often monotonous, sometimes enigmatical and mute façade, the interior itself of the palace and the house; to penetrate into intimate life, and reveal the trivial causes of great

(1) Mme de Maintenon's works have been published under the title of: *Lettres et Entretiens sur l'éducation*, *Lettres édifiantes*, *Mémoires des dames de Saint-Cyr*, etc. (Lavallée edition, 1854 and after, the first authentic edition).—*Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 209; 2nd cycle, p. 489.



events, or the paltry passions of men of high rank. Their value also consists in reconstituting the daily life of citizens in any epoch, which bulletins of victory or administrative acts only partially show.

Frequently, memoirs have another merit, that of style; and in this respect we have the same surprises as in the Letters. We may find people in fashionable society, who have written only for themselves and their intimates, better dowered by nature than professional authors.

**MME DE MOTTEVILLE** (1621-1689) left memoirs concerning Anne d'Au-triche, in whose suite she was from 1643-1666, and which were not published until 1723. They form a very simple narrative, enlivened by sympathy and devotion, written in an agreeable style, and whose value lies in their exactness and impartiality (4).

**MME DE LA FAYETTE** (1634-1693).—We possess what are probably only fragments of the memoirs of Mme de La Fayette for the years 1688 and 1689, which were published in 1731. The author of *La Princesse de Clèves* is superior to Mme de Motteville. She is a psychologist, in history as well as fiction, and her analysis of the feelings and actions of Louis XIV and of James II causes us to regret the shortness of her work.

**MME DE CAYLUS** (1673-1729) was the niece of Mme de Maintenon, and one of the most brilliant pupils of Saint-Cyr. It was in her old age that she dictated to her son some *Souvenirs*, unfinished, concerning the court of France at the end of the seventeenth century, which were published in 1770. There is no more agreeable book than that of Mme de Caylus to make us acquainted with Mme de Maintenon, the Duke du Maine, the Dauphiness, Saint-Cyr, the Duchess de Bourgogne. Her style is, according to Sainte-Beuve, a model of urbanity.

**MEMOIRS OF CARDINAL DE RETZ**.—Paul de Gondi, Cardinal de Retz, was born in 1614, and in 1643 appointed coadjutor to the Archbishop of Paris, who was his uncle. He played a brilliant and adventurous role in the Fronde. But after being appointed Cardinal he became wiser, and spent his time in a studious retreat, writing his *Mémoires*, which he devoted almost exclusively to a history of the Fronde.—We must not expect of Retz an honest narrative of events, but rather "events seen through temperament." This temperament, overwhelming, violent, egotistical, was also that of a vigorous writer, who, by his animation and whimsicalness was a precursor of Saint-Simon. Like him, Retz excelled especially in moral portraiture, neglecting the costume and attitude for the soul; but he was superior to Saint-Simon in clarity and the high relief of his style.

(4) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 496.



As a model of historical narrative, read Retz's *La Journée des Barricades*, which is both vivid and profound. Among the literary *portraits*, read those of the Duke d'Orléans (Gaston), of M. le Prince (Condé), of MM. de Beaufort, de La Rochefoucauld, of Mmes de Longueville, de Chevreuse, de Montbazou, etc. (1).



THE CARDINAL OF RETZ

From the print engraved by Van Schuppen (1662).

was appointed ambassador to Spain. But the death of the Regent, in 1723, put an end to his diplomatic and political career.—He spent all the remaining thirty years of his life in writing his *Mémoires*. He shut himself sometimes in his Château at La Ferté, sometimes in his Paris hôtel in the rue des Saints-Pères, where he had a magnificent library.

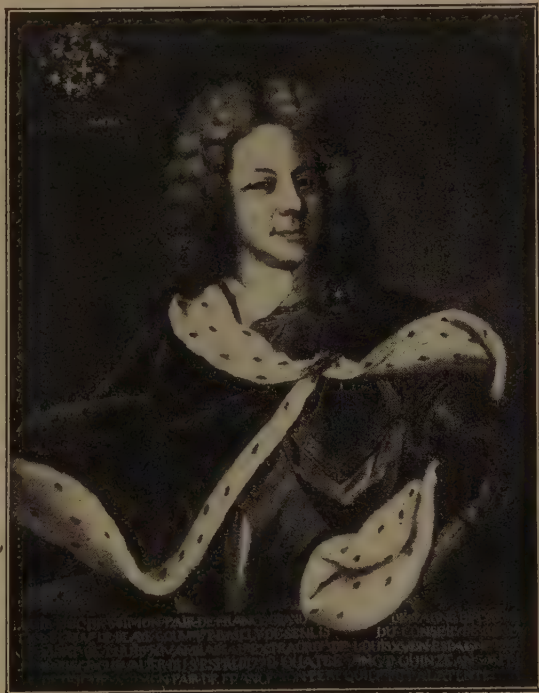
*His Method of Composition.*—The first idea of his *Mémoires* came to him when quite young; and from the age of twenty he made notes of all events, and especially personages. In 1730, he began to read the *Journal de Dangeau*, a copy of which had been given him by the Duke de Luynes. With the accuracy of a

#### SAINT-SIMON (1675-

1755). — *Life.* — Louis de Rouvroy, Duke de Saint-Simon, was born sickly and fretful. His father, disgraced by Richelieu, filled the child with his rancour and his vanities. In 1691, Louis de Saint-Simon was presented to the king and joined the musketeers; he soon resigned, because he thought himself victim of an injustice, but he continued to reside at court, and married. He gave himself great importance, solicited all the highest offices, and made his complaints to the Dukes d'Orléans and de Bourgogne, whose death was a cruel disappointment to him. In 1715, he entered the Council of the Regency, and in 1721

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 213; 2nd cycle, p. 500.

good accountant, Dangeau had noted every event, small or great, between the years 1684 and 1720. Saint-Simon had judged him to be of "a nauseating insipidity;" he covered the book with notes, and rewrote it.—How did he add his own to Dangeau's work? He transcribed the latter for the sequence of facts, and when he came to a name or date of importance, he stopped and developed the narrative. He first drew upon the memories of things he had himself seen and men he had known, and he was an extraordinarily close observer, "scrutinising with sidelong glances every face, every deportment, every movement, and delighting exquisitely his curiosity." And he was always an impassioned witness. Read his famous account of the parliamentary session of August 26, 1718, when Louis XIV's will was broken; he says: "I suffocated with silence... I sweated with anguish... With my eyes fixed, glued to the superb citizens... I nearly died of joy; I feared to swoon; my heart so swelled that it had not enough room to expand in..." But impassioned as he was, nothing escaped this witness; he saw every thing with appalling distinctness.—With his gift for observation, Saint-Simon also had a mania for verbal information. All gossip was welcome to him, whether it came from great lords and ladies, like the Duke de Beauvilliers and the Princess des Ursins, from ministers like Chamillart whose daughters, the Duchesses de Lorges, de Mortemart and de La Feuillade gave him many details about the young Duchess de Bourgogne, or from valets, lackeys and servants. And this is what somewhat spoils Saint-Simon for us: there is too much gossip in his *Mémoires*.



SAINT-SIMON

From a contemporary portrait.

*His Truthfulness.*—Gaston Boissier very truly says that, though Saint-

Simon's *Mémoires* are useful to the *historian*, they are not history; and that there are three reasons for doubting them: 1° These *Mémoires* are inspired by passion, pride and anger. Saint-Simon, tainted with the most narrow ideas concerning the nobility, himself of a nervous and susceptible temperament, cultivated resentment against all those who, near or far, had misunderstood, disdained or wounded his pretensions; 2° He was not intelligent, in believing everything that was told him. "When there was question of harming people whom he did not like, this man of wit, this sceptic, showed surprising credulity. All that he heard against them, improbable as it might be, he accepted as true; he doubted nothing, because he believed them capable of anything." 3° He was not sensitive. He hated his enemies in cold blood, and this hatred blinded and led him astray.

Let us be on our guard, therefore, when reading Saint-Simon's *Mémoires*, against his virtuous indignation, which was sincere but *irresponsable*.

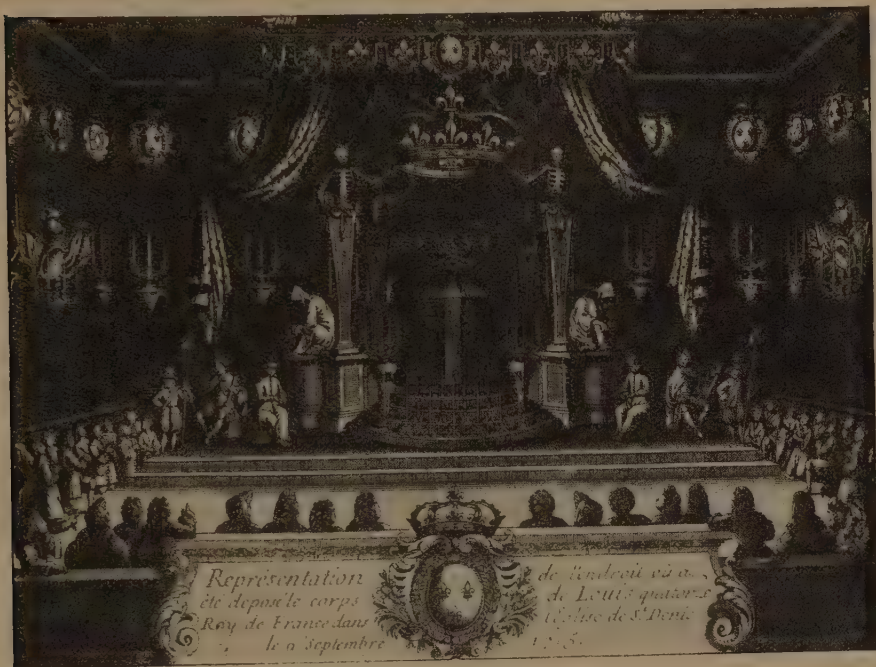
*His Style*.—On the contrary, let us admire almost without reserve his style and his language. "I am not an Academic subject," he said; and, indeed, nothing could be less pure, less correct, than his manner of writing. It should not be taken for a model, certainly; but he must be praised for having found modes of expression to describe the external aspect of people, and the whole of a picture, and to present analyses of his own and others' sentiments, which are at once unexpected and right, and which overwhelm us. His descriptions of great scenes (the Parliamentary session, the death of the great Dauphin, the marriage of the Duke de Chartres, etc.), his literary sketches of the Bishop of Noyon, of Mme de Gesvres, Mme de Luxembourg, Princess d'Harcourt, Mme de Castries, etc.) are marvels of wit and vividness. Before reading them, we form no idea of the many picturesque and colourful expressions of which the French vocabulary is capable. Eloquent and emotional pages are not lacking along with these *caricatures*. Nothing could be finer than his portraits of Fénelon and the Duke de Bourgogne (4).—His syntax is a singular admixture of archaic turns and involved expression which embarrass his style, and of rapid, vertiginous vivacity. This he inherits from Rabelais, who sometimes overburdened his periods extremely, and sometimes used short phrases, cutting and brutal.

*Publication*.—At Saint-Simon's death, all his papers were seized and taken to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as "concerning the service of the State and the king." The *Mémoires* were consulted by a few privileged persons; Voltaire took out several anecdotes for his *Siècle de Louis XIV*; Choiseul had a copy made of them. In 1762, Abbé de Voisenon published some extracts; in 1788, there was a three-volume edition, successively enlarged in 1789 and 1791. But the first true edition of the *Mémoires de Saint-Simon* appeared in 1829, through the efforts of the Marquis de Saint-Simon, his grandson (21 vols.) In 1856,

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 217; 2nd cycle p. 504.



M. Chéruef published a new and more complete edition in twenty volumes. Finally, M. de Boislisle's edition, in course of publication (1914), in the *Collec-*



LOUIS XIV'S ILLUMINATED CHAPEL

From an anonymous print of the XVIII century.

*tion des grands écrivains de la France*, leaves out nothing that Saint-Simon's readers might miss.

## VI. — NOVELS.

We group with the *Lettres* and the *Mémoires* the novels of the seventeenth century, which formed one of the diversions of polite society, and are a part of what may properly be called *fashionable literature*.

It was long believed that no novel worthy of the name appeared before the eighteenth century, and the imitations of the English novel. We have corrected this error, for French literature has been fertile in novels from mediæval times down to the present; and the seventeenth century, though leaving only one classical masterpiece in this genre, produced a great number of novels. Their

success shows us, better perhaps than a tragedy by Racine or a sermon by Bossuet, the prevailing taste of the seventeenth century; and in their turn they exercised a considerable influence upon poetry.

### THE PASTORAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVEL

**HONORÉ D'URFÉ** (1568-1625).—**L'Astrée** (1610-1627).—A double imitation

of Spanish and Italian works gave rise to the *pastoral novel*, of which *L'Astrée*, by Honoré d'Urfé, is the masterpiece.

In Spain, Montemayor's *Diane* (1542) related the love affairs of conventional shepherds and shepherdesses amid charming natural scenes. Translated in 1578, this celebrated and distinguished work had considerable success in France.—Cervantes' *Galathée* (1584) belonged to the same genre.—Italy, on her side, produced dramatic pastorals, such as Tasso's *Aminta* (1581) and Guarini's *Pastor fido* (1585).—French society, under Henri IV and Louis XIII, was enthusiastic over this piquant admixture of naturalness and affectation, which it applauded at the theatre; and it was well disposed to welcome a French novel written in the same manner, and which indulged its ideal of delicacy and gallantry.



HONORÉ D'URFÉ

From the original picture by Van Dyck and engraved  
by Pierre de Baillue.

Honoré d'Urfé's youth had been passed in his château on the Lignon, a little river with charming banks in the plain of the Forez. Compromised in the Ligue troubles, he was imprisoned and finally banished; and it was at Chambéry

that, an unoccupied nobleman, he wrote *L'Astrée*. He published the first two parts in 1610, the third in 1619; the fourth was published by his secretary, Baro, in 1627, who also added a denouement forming a fifth part, from d'Urfé's notes. *L'Astrée* consists, therefore, of five volumes, each divided into twelve books.

The plot of the novel is not very intricate. The shepherd Céladon loves the shepherdess Astrée. The latter allows herself to be persuaded that Céladon has deceived her, and banishes him from her presence; Céladon in despair throws himself into the Lignon. But one may always feel secure concerning the fate of a hero who drowns himself in the first volume of a novel which includes five. Céladon is saved by the nymphs that live in the Lignon. The nymph Galathée loves him (as Didon loved Enée and as later Calypso loved Télémaque); but he resists this love, and takes refuge in a cavern where he raises an altar to Astrée. At length, after many contrivances, reconciliations, complications and enchantments, etc., Céladon marries Astrée. This plot is intersected by several others; and narratives and tales are interpolated in the main story. The development of the plot is slow and diffuse; gallant dissertations, and refined analyses constantly impede the progress of events. This was exactly what the seventeenth century liked; and it may be said that in *Astrée* lay the germ of the whole psychology of the drama.

The heroine is a haughty and capricious shepherdess, who makes Céladon her



FRONTISPIECE OF *L'ASTRÉE*  
From a print of the time of Louis XIII.



slave, and whose love appears principally in her regret and remorse for her own severity. She loves Céladon, but through pride and vainglory she puts him to the proof as the great lady of the middle ages did to her knight. Céladon is the perfect lover, devoted and loyal unto death. To us he seems to lack energy; but to readers of those times this absolute submission to the beloved woman seemed truly heroic. The shepherd Sylvandre represents reasonable and calm love; Hylas, the inconstant and railing shepherd, contributes a note of amusing realism to this over-sentimental book.

*L'Astrée* did not only delight the wittiest women, from Mme de Rambouillet to Mme de Sévigné, but was for a long time popular with the most serious-minded men. Saint François de Sales, Huet, Patru, Boileau, La Fontaine spoke of it with esteem or enthusiasm. In the eighteenth century it was still read, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau made a pilgrimage to d'Urfé's château.

The success of *Astrée* naturally produced imitations, of which the most famous were those by **Pierre Camus**, Bishop of Belley (1585-1653), whose object was to make novels moral and religious. He composed a great number of books in which the strangest adventures are mixed up with the most tender devotion, in a style which aspired to the picturesque gentleness of Saint François de Sales. He did not lack readers then, but his books are not readable now.

On the other hand, the pastoral genre brought about a reaction, which was evident in the witty novels of **Charles Sorel** (1598-1674), such as *L'histoire comique de Francion* (1622), in which the characters are drawn from the lowest society; and especially *Le Berger extravagant* (1628) which might have been, had the author possessed sufficient genius, the French *Don Quixote*.

## THE NOVEL OF ADVENTURE.

We should first mention the novelist **Gomberville**, whose *Polexandre* (1642) had an enormous success, justified by the variety of the descriptions; and **Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin**, who published *Ariane* in 1632.

But the master of this genre, the Dumas père of the seventeenth century, is **La Calprenède** (1609-1663), whose name would now be forgotten but for Boileau's banter. Besides several plays, La Calprenède published some sword-and-cape novels, the subjects of which he borrowed from history. The heroes of his *Cassandre* (1642-1643, 10 vols.) are Alexander the Great, the Scythian Oro-date and Princess Statira, daughter of Darius. The entanglement of historical and romantic facts is rather ingenious. Still more famous was his *Cléopâtre* (1647, 12 vols.), Queen of Egypt, loved by Juba, Prince of Mauritania; in this novel appeared the celebrated Artaban, whose pride has become proverbial. The authentic relationship between La Calprenède's heroes and those of Corneille has been pointed out; in both there is the same conception of love found-



ed upon esteem, and upon the triumph of the will. The fashionable world of that epoch admired them equally; Mme de Sévigné often referred to La Calprenède, and in the eighteenth century he was still read.

### THE HEROIC AND PRÉCIEUX NOVEL

**Mlle DE SCUDÉRY.**—Madeleine de Scudéry (1608-1701), who became one of the most illustrious *précieuses* and whose Saturdays continued, with certain changes, the influence of the reunions in the *Chambre bleue*, undertook, in partnership with her brother Georges, a series of novels whose success was greater than that of their predecessors. The subjects were taken from history: *Ibrahim ou l'illustre Bassa*, from Turkish history; *Artamène ou Le Grand Cyrus*, 1648, from ancient Persia; *Clélie*, 1654, from Rome at the time of the kings, etc. It is probable that the adventures, sword-play, and battles were the work of Georges, the captain "with the fertile pen". The analyses, and the moral dissertations, in fact all the psychological part—which was the cause of their success and which constitutes the originality of these novels—was the work of Madeleine. "This collaboration resulted in very curious works which look like novels by Dumas père rewritten by Paul Bourget(1)."

The most celebrated of these novels is *Le Grand Cyrus*. Cyrus, son of Cambyse, under the name of Artamène, is in love with Mandane, daughter of the king of the Medes. He fights for her with those who would carry her off, and invades Asia in order to find and marry her. To-day we are shocked by the anachronisms in morals and sentiments displayed in *Le Grand Cyrus*; but that is just what charmed contemporary readers, for Mlle de Scudéry had not in the least intended to paint the ancients. Since Victor Cousin discovered the key to the *Grand Cyrus*, we know that the author's intention was to paint the society of her own time in the characters of her novel. Cyrus is the Great Condé; Mandane, Mme de Longueville; and nearly all the *habitués* of the Hôtel de Rambouillet and of the Saturdays are to be found there, even Mlle de Scudéry herself under the name of Sapho. These characters are well drawn, though with rather laborious and diffuse application; but the psychological analysis had to be both exact and tactful for the originals to recognise themselves without being displeased.

*Clélie* is also a novel with a key (Mme Scarron, the future Mme de Maintenon, appears in it as the virtuous Lyriane). In this book, also, is the famous *Carte du Tendre*. This is merely an agreeable and very ingenious bit of badinage, which it would be ridiculous to feel any indignation about. Examine this map, as an analysis of the different sorts of love or *tendre*. Three cities bear the name Tendre: Tendre-sur-Estime, Tendre-sur-Reconnaissance, Tendre-sur-Incli-

(1) P. MORILLOT, *Le Roman en France*, 1892, p. 81.

nation; the roads leading to them are marked with villages, which are so many stages of the journey. If one arrives very quickly at Tendre-sur-Inclination, the road is longer and more difficult to Tendre-sur-Estime. So, after all, when we know how to interpret this jargon of gallantry, the map proves to be that of a very well-known country (1).

These heroic and "*précieux*" novels no doubt met with exaggerated success among fashionable people; but, at all events, they were moral and distinguished productions whose psychology did honour to the society which inspired them and recognised itself in their pages.

### REALISTIC NOVELS.

Novels in every genre were produced in the seventeenth century. We have already referred to those by Ch. Sorel, which represented a reaction from *L'As-trée*.

To these must be added two works by **CYRANO DE BERGERAC** (1619-1655): *L'Histoire comique des états et empires de la lune*, and *L'Histoire comique des états et empires du soleil*, which are partly serious and partly burlesque, and exhibit an audacity and truculence which remind the reader of Rabelais and Swift.

While people were enjoying the interesting inventions of La Calprenède and the refinement of Mlle de Scudéry, **SCARRON** (1610-1660) published in *Le Roman comique* (1631), the true history of a company of itinerant actors and of some ridiculous provincials. The chief characters are Destin, Léandre, La Rancune, actors; L'Étoile, La Caverne, and Angélique, actresses; the poet Roquebrune; the lawyer, Ragotin, and M. de la Baguenodière, a country squire. These strongly characterized individuals, grotesque and ridiculous, move amid picturesque descriptions like Teniers paintings.

**FURETIÈRE** (1620-1688), chiefly celebrated for the publication of a *Dictionnaire* which caused him to be turned out of the French Academy, must not be confused with the *Grotesques* of the seventeenth century. He was a friend of the greatest classical writers, like Boileau, Molière, La Fontaine, Racine. Also, his *Roman bourgeois* (1666) was a witty retort to the extravagances of the heroic and *précieux* novel. The plot deals with lawyers, and attorneys in the "*quartier Maubert*". The realism is excellent and not exaggerated though heightened by satire: it has the piquant tone of the *Repas ridicule* and of the *Lutrin*, and is still interesting.

(1) The editions of *Les Précieuses Ridicules*, by G. LARROUMET (Garnier), and P. CROUZET (Didier-Privat), contain a fac-simile of the Carte du Tendre.





## THE PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVEL.

**MME DE LA FAYETTE** (1634-1693). Few women, in the seventeenth century, which possessed so many who were distinguished and amiable, were more

attractive than Mme de la Fayette. With an education as substantial as that of Mme de Sévigné, and a character of the highest virtue, she had a melancholy charm which is especially seductive for us. She received in her salon the élite of intellectual and aristocratic society—Condé, Mme de Sévigné, La Fontaine, La Rochefoucauld. Into La Rochefoucauld's mind she instilled wholesome doubts as to the exaggerated severity of his *Maximes*, so that, when she had succeeded in softening his severity, she could say, "He charmed me with his intelligence, but I reformed his heart".

Mme de la Fayette published a novel entitled: *Mlle de Montpensier* (1662), a narrative in which the interest lies entirely in a contempt for love. This was followed in 1670 by *Zayde*, in which romantic adventure unduly predominates. But several passages exhibit a genuine talent for analysis without insipidity or affectation.

Finally, in 1677, Mme de la Fayette published, under the name of Segrais, *La Princesse de Clèves*.

What first strikes us in this masterpiece is its brevity. Mlle de Scudéry car-



PORTRAIT OF MADAME DE LA FAYETTE

From the print by Desrochers.



ried her heroes through ten volumes; two hundred pages sufficed Mme de La Fayette. Furthermore, there is the same simplicity of action in this novel as in a tragedy by Racine. It deals with a soul crisis, and the kind of love analysed here is passion and not gallantry.

The subject of the plot is as follows: Mlle de Chartres has married the Prince de Clèves, for whom she feels only "esteem". The Princess is a highly virtuous woman, who feels sure of herself. However, the Duc de Nemours, with whom she dances at the Louvre, makes a very disquieting impression upon her and Nemours seeks every possible occasion to declare his love. The princess, feeling herself a prey to involuntary passion, heroically decides to confess everything to her husband, and ask his protection from this peril. M. de Clèves admires the virtue of his wife, but soon afterwards he dies heart broken by this confession, and by the involuntary jealousy which consumes him. The Princess, after his death, refuses to marry Nemours, and retires to a convent. This little novel must be read, and a summary is not enough, to feel its acute charm and its moral beauty; its style is exquisite.

**Perrault's Stories.** — Finally, a place must be given in French literature to the *Contes* published by Charles Perrault in 1697.—This Perrault was the youngest of four brothers, of whom the second, Claude, was the celebrated architect of the colonnade of the Louvre (1). It was Charles who started the famous debate at the French Academy on the ancients and the moderns. He first published verses in several fashionable collections, and published in the same way *Les Souhairs ridicules* and *Peau d'âne*. He then renounced poetry for prose, and published, at first separately and afterwards in 1697 in one volume, his *Contes* under the name of his son then ten years of age. Who does not know *Le Petit Chaperon rouge*, *La Belle au bois dormant*, etc.?—These tales were not invented by Perrault; they had passed from mouth to mouth, and formed a part of folklore; but Perrault gave them their final form, and attached his name to them for ever.

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(1) Claude Perrault was at first a physician. Boileau relates his history at the beginning of the fourth canto of *L'Art poétique*: "De mauvais médecin devint bon architecte".—See Boileau (Hatier, 1913), p. 429.

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BOTTOM OF LAMP BY SEBASTIEN LE CLERC (1632-1712)



DECORATIVE FRIEZE BY JEAN LEPAUTRE (1618-1682).

## CHAPTER IX.

### RACINE AND TRAGEDY FROM 1660 TO 1700.

#### SUMMARY

1° **RACINE** (1639-1699), a pupil of Port-Royal, made his debut as a dramatist in *La Thébàide*. His first success was *Andromaque* in 1667; he renounced the theatre in 1677, after the momentary failure of *Phèdre*.

2° Racine took his subjects from history, legend, and the Greek tragic poets. His first preoccupation was to make his work probable, that is, capable of producing the illusion of life; between the **exposition** of the play and its **dénouement** there are no **facts** but only the play of passions, and psychological analysis.

3° The mainspring of Racine's tragedies is **love**.—In merely gallant episodes, his characters speak in the fashion of the time; but when he treats of love as a passion, Racine is nature itself; he especially achieves tragic force **through jealousy**.

4° Imitator of the ancients, Racine borrowed for the first sketch of his characters, but he added to this all the **psychological acquisitions** of modern times. Sometimes he has not known how to avoid incongruity between the ancient and modern characteristics.

5° In his tragedies Racine is **dramatic** and **scenic**, and the more his characters are impassioned, the more natural he seems.

6° In prose, Racine has left **Letters**, fragments of a *Histoire de Louis XIV*, and especially *L'Abrégé de l'histoire de Port-Royal*, which was published after his death.

7° **CONTEMPORARY POETS** :—**CORNEILLE** did not abandon the theatre until 1674; his brother **THOMAS** published his successful pieces between 1672 and 1678; **PRADON** is famous because of the quarrel about *Phèdre*; **QUINAULT** was a mediocre tragic poet, but wrote some **libretti** (*Proserpine*, *Armide*, etc.) which are masterpieces in their genre.

## RACINE (1639-1699).



DECORATED LETTER  
by Fr. Chauveau.

**life. — Childhood.** — Jean Racine belonged to a family whose antecedents influenced his education and his entire life. His father was superintendent of the salt storehouse at La Ferté-Milon, and in this place, in 1638, a few of the most celebrated Jansenists took refuge, *Lancelot*, *Le Maître* and *Séricourt*. Having been dispersed by the first persecution, they had sought an asylum in families who favoured their ideas, particularly the *Vitarts* of La Ferté-Milon, near relatives of the Racines. Jean Racine was born on December 21, 1639; two years later his mother died, and two years after that, his father. The young Racine, thus orphaned, was taken by his grandmother

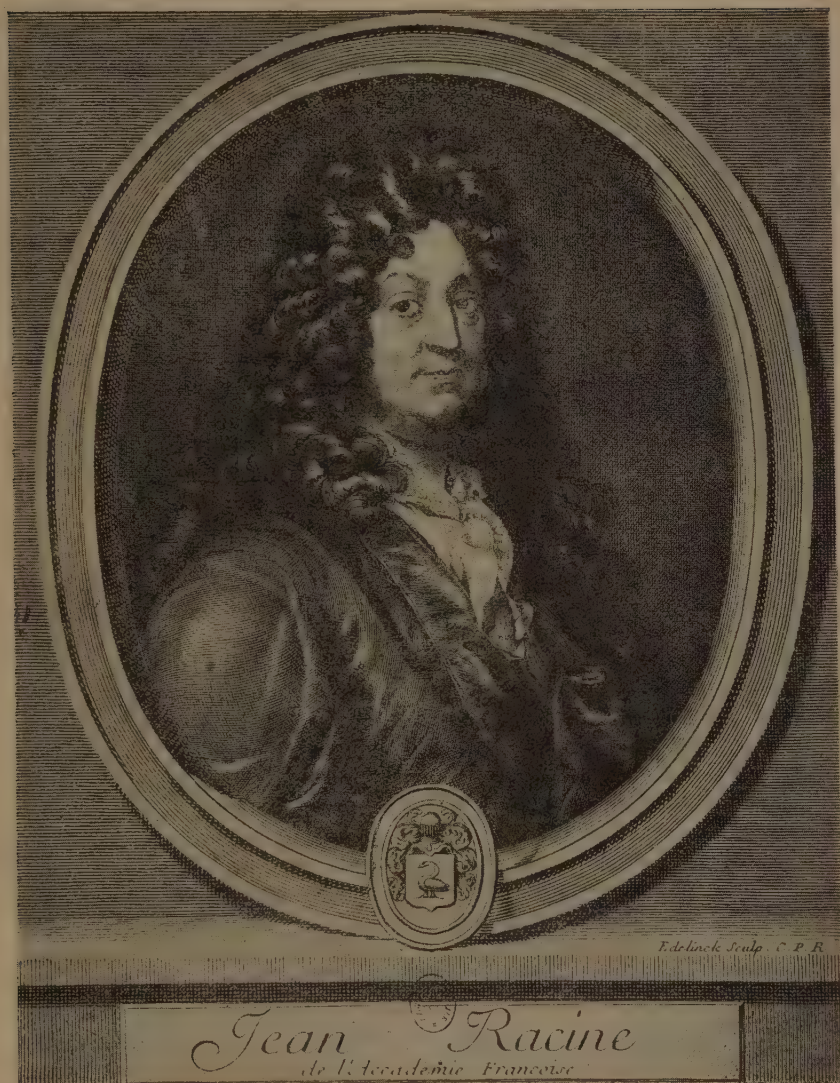
Marie des Moulins, sister of Mme Vitart. Now, this Marie des Moulins had a daughter who was a nun in the convent of Port-Royal, Mother *Agnès de Saint-Thècle*; two of her sisters were also nuns there; and she, herself, being widowed in 1649, went there to join her daughter and sisters. Wishing to have her grandson brought up with the same ideas, she sent him to the college of *Beauvais* (1), which was conducted by Jansenists. At the age of sixteen, Racine left Beauvais for the school near Port-Royal des-Champs which was taught by the Messieurs themselves, and known as *Les Granges*.

On the northern side of the hill which overlooks the valley still stands the old school house, which not only has escaped destruction, but has even kept its distinct seventeenth century appearance (2). There, while recalling the destroyed abbey, we can evoke the memory of these solitary scholars of whom young Racine was the pupil. There it was that, far from all external distractions, Racine unconsciously felt the powerful influence of his masters, the restrained and penetrating charm of a calm and harmonious countryside, which he described in his first verses. Here he passed long hours under the trees reading the Greek text of Euripides' tragedies, or Héliodorus' novel, *Théagène et Chariclée*. But, above all, he was reared in the scrupulously severe religious sentiments of the Jansenist faith, whose rigidity is at once its glory and its fault. This early education made upon Racine so profound and indelible an impression that his dramatic success was to be poisoned by the memory of his pure and religious youth; so that, after the momentary failure of *Phèdre*, he

(1) Of the town of Beauvais; there was also a college of Beauvais at Paris, which took its name from its founder, a Bishop of Beauvais, and whose chapel is still standing in the rue Jean-de-Beauvais.

(2) Cf. *Port-Royal-des-Champs*, historical notice by A. Gazier, 4th edition, 1905, Plon.—Also, *Le Pèlerinage de Port-Royal*, by André Hallays 1909, Perrin.





PORTRAIT OF RACINE

From the print engraved by Gérard Edelinck (1649-1707).

wished to become a carthusian to expiate, as he said, the scandals of his past life.

Racine finished his studies at the college of Harcourt, at Paris, which was situated upon nearly the same site as the present lycée Saint-Louis. This college, also, was entirely devoted to Jansenism.

**Poetical-début.** — In the year 1660, Racine published his first poem, an ode entitled *La Nympe de la Seine*, composed for the king's marriage. It is a curious and almost ironical circumstance, that the young poet, who was later to become the docile friend of Boileau, asked the advice of Chapelain upon this first venture.—It was the year after that he began to dream of writing dramas, as we see by his correspondence. He filled at that time a small situation at his uncle's, the latter being steward of the Chevreuse family; and he already began to emancipate himself from the severe discipline of Port-Royal. His aunt, Mother Agnès, wrote letters about him which were more distressed than they were severe. But Racine, fatally led by his *démon*, resisted all these appeals; he became a friend of La Fontaine, and especially of La Fontaine's friends, and this milieu resembled in no wise that of Port-Royal.

**Sojourn at Uzès. — Return to Paris (1663).** — His family made a supreme effort to save him from the world. One of his uncles, Antoine Sconin, Vicar-General at Uzès, summoned him and promised him a benefice if he would consent to take holy orders. Racine left for the Midi. We have a few of his letters dated from Uzès and addressed to his uncle Vitart and to Abbé Levasseur. They are charming, full of intelligence, dealing very little with theology and much with the country, the harvests, and the cicadas; with Latin and Italian poets, too, and with poetry generally, which engrossed all his attention. If he referred to his future benefice, it was in connection with a law-case which deprived him of all ecclesiastical ambition, and which inspired him with such horror for chicanery that he was to revenge himself later in *Les Plaideurs*. In short, Racine returned to Paris in 1663, happy to have lost his case, in which, as he said, neither himself nor his judges understood anything. His poetic vocation was decidedly the strongest, and everything bowed to it.

He had hardly returned when he published an *Ode sur la convalescence du roi*. Upon this occasion he received a sum of six hundred "livres", and felt it a duty to thank Louis XIV by a new piece entitled *La Renommée aux Muses*. It is an allegory, in which Fame, the goddess of the hundred voices, addressing the Muses, announces that an enlightened monarch, a friend to poetry, will henceforth take men of letters under his protection.

**First dramas (1664).** — These occasional pieces did not prevent Racine from working on a tragedy which was soon to be acted. *La Thébàide ou les Frères*

*ennemis* was given by Racine to Molière, whose troupe was then acting at the theatre of the Palais-Royal; and the first representation took place on June 20, 1664. It would be difficult to find in this *Thébaïde* any promise of great dramatic genius (1).—The following year, on December 4, 1665, Racine's *Alexandre* was given; and this time, he not only had imitated Corneille but Quinault as well. *Alexandre* had great success: it was written in the taste of the time—bad taste, be it understood. If Racine had continued on these lines, he would have been applauded without reserve, but to-day would be forgotten irrevocably.

All the same, *Alexandre* marks an important date in Racine's life. First, it was the cause of his rupture with Molière. While Molière's troupe was acting the piece at the Palais-Royal, Racine, dissatisfied with the interpretation, transferred the play to the Hôtel de Bourgogne, and it was given at both theatres at once. Molière was angry; the more so as Racine, persevering in his ill-doing, persuaded Molière's best actress, Mlle du Parc, to go over to the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Thus, in its beginning, was a friendship broken off that might have proved fecund, and it was entirely Racine who was in the wrong (2). This was the first exhibition of this irritable and sensitive humour through which Racine acquired so many enemies among his contemporaries. But the relations between the two poets were then comparatively recent.

**Racine and Port-Royal.** — What can be said, on the contrary, concerning Racine's sudden change of attitude toward Port-Royal, and those worthy masters to whom he owed everything? Mother Agnès had redoubled her warnings; and Nicole, one of the most illustrious of the Messieurs, had cried: "A theatrical poet is a public poisoner, not of the bodies but of the souls of the faithful, who should consider himself guilty of an infinite number of spiritual homicides (3)." These words hurt Racine acutely; and drawing inspiration from Pascal's *Provinciales*, he wrote a Letter against Port-Royal, which is a masterpiece of wit, but also of the blackest ingratitude. A second *Lettre* was about to follow the first, when Boileau, with his rectitude and common sense, remarked to Racine that he was attacking the best people in the world. And, we should add, these "best people" were then being persecuted. Racine did not publish his second letter and the first caused him later undying remorse.

However, he had broken off with Port-Royal. In 1667, he had become, with his *Andromaque*, the greatest dramatic poet of his time. From 1667 to 1677, seven of his tragedies were acted at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. All achieved success;

(1) Cf. *Racine*, Fourcassé, ed. (Hatier).

(2) C. *Molière* (Hatier), p. 281.

(3) Nicole thus expressed himself in one of his letters upon *Les Hérésies imaginaires* (déc., 1665), directed against Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, author of the *Visionnaires*, who had just attacked Port-Royal.



but while some, like *Andromaque*, *Bérénice* and *Iphigénie*, triumphed without difficulty, others, such as *Britannicus*, *Bajazet* and especially *Phèdre* met with violent opposition.

**Racine's Retirement** (1677). — Meanwhile, in 1673, Racine had entered the French Academy, and in 1674, was appointed Counsellor to the King. Though fêted at the theatre, received at court, sought after by everybody for his genius and his sarcastic wit, Racine was not happy. The least criticism upset him completely; it was in vain that he retorted with bitter Prefaces and deadly epigrams. The memory of Port-Royal haunted him; there his old aunt, Mother Agnès, awaited patiently the return of the prodigal; Lemaître, Lancelot, Nicole, Arnould, spoke of him with sighs. In this state of mind, Racine saw his *Phèdre* almost doomed through the influence of a clique, the Princess de Bouillon and the Duchess de Nevers setting up Pradon's *Phèdre* against his own. The poet could easily have consoled himself for this transient failure with the lasting triumph which soon followed; but in the troubled state of his mind, he saw in the check suffered by *Phèdre* a warning from Heaven. It was then reported to him that Arnould, the Great Arnould, the most severe of the Jansenists, had passed a favourable judgment upon this last tragedy, and Boileau undertook to reconcile them. No simpler or more touching scene could be found. Boileau took Racine to Port-Royal. Racine, on the threshold, had no sooner seen Arnould than he felt his heart melt and his legs give way under him; he became again the "petit Racine" of Port-Royal, and fell on his knees weeping. Arnould begged him to rise, but as Racine remained where he was, Arnould threw himself down beside him and they embraced.

From that day, Racine died to the world; the love of God had reentered his heart, and so redeemed it that he resolved to enter a cloister. But, upon the advice of his confessor, he decided finally to marry. His wife, Catherine de Romanet, was simple and good; educated, but not sensitive to the charms of poetry. She bore him seven children (1).

**Last Years.** — During this period, from 1677 to the date of his death, 1699, Racine's life passed calmly in devotion to his family and to Louis XIV, who appointed him his historiographer. For Louis XIV he had a tender admiration. Nor did he hesitate to return to dramatic poetry, which he had completely abandoned, and to write at Mme de Maintenon's instigation his tragedy of *Esther*, which was acted at Saint-Cyr in 1689 with the most brilliant success. It must be noted that he did not intend it as a work for the theatre; he entitled

(1) The eldest, Jean-Baptiste, to whom his father addressed exquisite letters, died unmarried at sixty-nine; the last, Louis Racine, wrote a *Mémoire* on the life of his father, poems on *Grace* and *Religion*, and had a son who died in the Lisbon earthquake in 1755. Of his five daughters three became nuns, and only one married.



it : *Ouvrage propre à être récité et chanté*. Two years later, he composed *Athalie*; but the success of *Esther* had troubled Mme de Maintenon, who feared to develop in her pupils at Saint-Cyr a worldly and coquettish taste. *Athalie* was to be played, without scenery or costumes, at Versailles before the king.

Is it true that Racine, shortly before his death, was disgraced by Louis XIV, as appears from one of his letters to Mme de Maintenon? The question has never been cleared up. Louis Racine, his son, wrote that his father had sent the king a memoir on the misery of the people, and that Louis XIV was angry at the poet for his indiscreet interference in affairs of state. —Others call attention to the fact that Racine had openly remained friend with the *Messieurs de Port-Royal*, who were more suspected than ever and actively persecuted. —It is certain, however, that the king's favour was at times withdrawn, and that Racine was keenly affected by this. But the favour was always promptly revived; and when the king heard of his death, April 21, 1699, he spoke of him with emotion and in terms of praise.

Racine had asked, as an honour, to be buried in the cemetery of Port-Royal-des-Champs, at the feet of M. Hamon. When the abbey was destroyed, in 1711, his remains were taken to the church of Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, at Paris, where



RACINE'S HOUSE, MARAIS STREET  
To-day Visconti Street.

they still are, and where we may read his Latin epitaph composed by Boileau (1).

**History of his Dramas.** — **La Thébaïde ou les Frères ennemis** (1664). — Racine drew the inspiration for his first piece from the *Septem* of Æschylus, Euripides', *Phœnicæ*, Seneca's *Phœnicæ*, Statius' epic poem, *Thebais*, and a French piece, by Rotrou, *Antigone* (1638). The main theme is the famous rivalry between Œdipus' two sons, Eteocles and Polyneices, who end by killing each other. But, as a disciple of Corneille, — the Corneille of the *Œdipe*, — Racine mingled the insipidity of gallant love with this shocking story.

**1665. Alexandre le Grand.** — The subject was drawn from Quintus-Curtius, who left a narrative in Latin of the exploits of Alexander. But though Racine boasts in his preface of having faithfully followed history, the romantic element dominates in his tragedy. The subject is simple. Alexandre has pursued his conquests as far as the Indies, where he finds himself in the presence of two kings, Taxile and Pôrus; the first would be willing to submit, and is not a dangerous enemy; but Pôrus resists, is vanquished and falls into the hands of Alexandre, who pardons him and restores to him his kingdom. But, in order to make a tragedy, the element of love is necessary, and we feel that, in such a theme, love will merely "serve as an ornament, and not as substance;" Racine, then, will imagine Alexandre in love with Cléofle, sister of king Taxile, and Pôrus in love with queen Axiane. This second of Racine's tragedies is, then, an admixture of serious events and gallant love, a compromise between the work of Corneille and that of Quinault, the two most popular poets of the day. For this reason the play was all the more successful, but it now seems old-fashioned. Racine dedicated it to Louis XIV.

**1667. Andromaque.** — This piece was taken from Greek and Latin sources. Racine has borrowed from Homer's *Iliad* (cantos VI and XXII), from Euripides' *Trojans* and *Andromache*, from Virgil's *Æneid* (Book III), and from Seneca's tragedy *Andromache*. In the work of the ancient poets, Andromache, captive and wife of Pyrrhus, had by this new marriage a son named Molossos; in Pyrrhus' absence, Hermione, being jealous, wishes the child to be destroyed, and the latter is saved through the intervention of the old Pélée, while Pyrrhus is killed at Delphos by Orestes. Racine imagines, on the contrary, that Andromaque, widow of Hector, taken in captivity by Pyrrhus after the Trojan war, has kept her son Astyanax. Pyrrhus, already betrothed to Hermione, daughter of Ménélas and Hélène, is in love with Andromaque and asks her to marry him. Andromaque does not wish to consent; Pyrrhus threatens to have the young Astyanax destroyed, his death being demanded by the Greeks. The play begins at the moment when Oreste, sent by the Grecian Assembly to claim Hector's son, arrives at Epire; Oreste is himself in love with Hermione, Pyrrhus' betrothed, and hopes that Andromaque, to save her son, will consent to marry Pyrrhus, so that he can marry Hermione. At first Pyrrhus refuses to deliver up the child to Oreste; then, because Andromaque will not consider his suit favourably, he declares that he will abandon Astyanax and will marry Hermione. But Andromaque opens the question again with Pyrrhus, and decides to marry him in order to save Hector's son, intending to kill herself as they come out of the temple. Hermione in a fury orders Oreste to sacrifice Pyrrhus to her jealousy, and Oreste obeys her; but when Pyrrhus is dead, Hermione in despair kills herself by his side. Andromaque and Astyanax are saved; Oreste goes mad.

(1) Cf. Boileau Hatier, p. 550

The novelty of *Andromaque* was as keenly appreciated as that of the *Cid*, and it had brilliant and lasting success. People used to say : " As fine as the *Cid* ; " they could have said : True and natural as *Andromaque*. Its novelty lay in two elements, with which all the others were connected : simplicity of action, everything depending upon a decision taken by *Andromaque*, and passionate love substituted for reasoning love (Corneille) and gallantry (Quinault). There was a *querelle d'Andromaque* as there had been a *querelle du Cid*. Jealous poets, like Thomas Corneille, Boursault, Le Clerc, Quinault, Pradon, and the great Corneille himself, and critics, like Conrart, Ménage, Chapelain ; spectators, whose ideal lay in the more heroic style of Corneille (like Madame de Sévigné, la Grande Mademoiselle, the Duke de Longueville, etc.), denied, for " professional " or sentimental reasons the charm of *Andromaque*. Saint-Evremond, who was then in England, wrote a letter to M. de Lionne about *Andromaque* and *Attila* (both played in the same year), in which he found only specious beauty in Racine's play, and expressed the opinion of the partisans of Corneille. Molière gave in his Palais-Royal theatre, on May 25, 1668, Subligny's *La Folle Querelle*, a kind of pamphlet written in dialogue, with a rudimentary plot, in which perhaps Molière collaborated (1) Racine had the young court on his side, and his dedication to Henriette d'Angleterre shows clearly whom he wished in future to please.



REPRESENTATION OF LES PLAIDEURS

From a small picture in the edition of Racine's Works, published in 1697.

**1668. Les Plaideurs.** — To revenge himself for a lost lawsuit, and also to prove that he was capable, as well as Corneille, of excelling in both genres, Racine wrote a charming comedy in three acts after *Andromaque*, and just before *Britannicus*. A part of the plot is imitated from Aristophanes' *Les Guêpes*, but he owed

(1) Concerning *La Folle Querelle*, and generally all Racine's enemies, the reader may be referred once for all, to F. Deltours's book. Cf *Molière* (Hatier), p. 487.



only to French tradition (*Pathelin*, Rabelais' "chats-fourrés", etc.), and to his friends Boileau, Furetière, La Fontaine and Chapelle, whom he met at the inn of the Mouton-Blanc, the sharp and witty satire of the judges and pleaders. A judge, Perrin Dandin, has become such a fanatic in his profession, that he never wishes to leave the tribunal, and his son is compelled to have him imprisoned and guarded in his house. Dandin attempts in every way to make his escape in order to run back to court. At last, to occupy his attention at home, he is set to judge a dog which has eaten a capon; his secretary, L'Intimé, defends the taccused, his porter, Petit-Jean, makes the plea against the dog. The plot is made more interesting by a short intrigue: Dandin's son, Léandre, loves Isabelle, daughter of Chicanneau, who is an incorrigible litigant, and marries her at the end of the play. The Countess de Pimbesche is another type of the persistent litigant. The style of this comedy is exquisite, and foretells the best work of Regnard. Coldly received at first, *Les Plaideurs* greatly amused Louis XIV, and everybody was willing to follow his leads. Since 1668, the piece has never been dropped from the theatrical repertory.

1669. **Britannicus.** — Racine's strongest partisans had above everything praised the tenderness of *Andromaque*; they had not recognised its strength, and seemed to avow that Corneille remained without an equal in historical tragedy. Racine then composed *Britannicus* (1), a Roman tragedy drawn from Tacitus' *Annales*. Thus he put to the proof his original power, having to create all the action; and he chose the gloomiest period of Roman history, as well as its most violent characters. The Roman emperor, Claude, had a son by his marriage to Messaline, named Britannicus. He had married for a second wife Agrippine, widow of Domitius Enobarbus, who through her intrigues, had caused Claude to adopt her own son Néron; after which, having poisoned Claude, she has Néron proclaimed emperor instead of Britannicus, the legitimate heir. But Agrippine has only given the power to her son in order to exercise it herself. At the beginning of the play, we learn that Néron has begun to emancipate himself from this bondage. He has had Junie, who was betrothed to Britannicus, carried off, and he refuses to receive his mother who has come to demand an explanation. Agrippine, to repossess herself of power, threatens to uphold the claims to the throne of Claude's son; upon this, the *monstre naissant* awakes, and, refusing the advice of the honest Burrhus to accept that of the perfidious Narcisse, plans to rid himself of Britannicus, his rival in politics and in love. After several alternative plans, which form the psychological interest of the piece, Néron decides to have Britannicus poisoned. Junie takes refuge with the Vestal Virgins, and Agrippine foresees her own downfall. Despite some opposition, *Britannicus* won its way and remained, according to Voltaire, "a play for connoisseurs." Irritated at first, however, by a cabal he believed to be directly inspired by Corneille, Racine published a Preface in which his glorious rival was scratched by the same pen which had written the "petite lettre" against Port-Royal. Once again Boileau intervened, and upon his remonstrances Racine suppressed the Preface in his second edition, and wrote another free from all personalities.—In *Britannicus* Racine adopted the genre of historical tragedy, and equalled Corneille in the first and third acts. But he most deserved praise for remaining true to himself in limiting his action to a moral crisis, and not following Nero beyond the first stage of his degeneracy. He dedicated *Britannicus* to the Duke de Chevreuse, to whom his uncle Vitart was steward.

1670. **Bérénice.** — *Bérénice* was taken from two lines written by the Latin historian Suetonius: *Titus reginam Berenice... cui etiam nuptias pollicitus ferebatur... statim ab Urbe dimisit invitum invitam.* This tragedy can hardly be analysed. It is altogether com-

(1) See the account of the first representation by Boursault, quoted by M. F. Hémon (*Cours de littérature, Britannicus*, p. 1).



posed of the hesitations of Titus, the hopes and fears of Bérénice; and, by a harmonious movement, ends in their mutual decision to separate. Racine, to vary and strengthen a too simple plot, invented the character of Antiochus who, in love with Queen Bérénice, follows her to Rome, hoping to profit by her rupture with Titus. But Bérénice, who is willing to renounce Titus, nevertheless will never forget him, and Antiochus, also, has to resign himself to leaving her. Was it true that Racine wished to allude to Louis XIV's love for Marie Mancini, Mazarin's niece? Or was it true that Henriette d'Angleterre, who had perhaps married Louis XIV without the "raison d'État", herself chose the dramatic situation and proposed it both to the aged Corneille and the young Racine, to put them to the test? This anecdote, first related vaguely by Fontenelle in his *Vie de Corneille* (1729), then repeated, as a fact by Louis Racine in 1747 and by Voltaire in 1765, now seems to have been abandoned. M. G. Michaut, who studied it closely, demonstrates its improbability (1). On the other hand, it appears probable that Racine wished to steal a march on Corneille by taking a subject which he knew that Corneille was using and would spoil, whereas Racine found in it exactly what best suited his poetic art and his style. *Bérénice* is the Racinian tragedy *par excellence*, and the Preface is a veritable manifesto. Racine dedicated it to Colbert.

We have already noticed two pieces, *Britannicus* and *Bérénice*, which were not in any way imitated from ancient tragedies, but entirely constructed by Racine; we shall presently advert to a third even more original.

**1672. Bajazet.** — The subject of this drama was entirely contemporary. M. de Cézzy, Ambassador to Constantinople, had narrated at Paris the circumstances surrounding the death of Bajazet, brother of the Sultan Amurat. The Chevalier de Nantouillet repeated this anecdote to Racine, who used it for his tragedy. But Racine must also have known a tale by Segrais, which had appeared in 1656, in which the same subject was handled. "A few readers may be surprised," he said in his second Preface, "that so recent a story should be put upon the stage; but I have found nothing in the rules for dramatic poems, which should turn me aside from my undertaking." At the same time, Racine added that in such a case the action should be placed in a foreign country. "The distance of the scene makes up in a way for the nearness of the time." The Sultan Amurat has a brother, Bajazet. Amurat, about to start on an expedition, leaves orders with Roxane, the sultanness, to have Bajazet killed. But Roxane loves the young prince, and offers to save him, if he will marry her. The grand visier, Acomat, is in the plot. Bajazet surprises Roxane by his hesitation, and she discovers his secret: he loves the princess Atalide, to whom he intends to be faithful. Then she makes him choose between the death of Atalide, or of himself. Bajazet is indignant: she causes him to be killed, and then kills herself. Atalide, too, does not wish to survive her lover; and Acomat dies fighting the soldiers of Amurat. Racine did not trouble himself about the external local colour of *Bajazet*, so dear to romanticists; but, if it may so be expressed, he sought rather an interior local colour: the action of this tragedy could never have passed anywhere but in the Orient, where passions are particularly intense; neither Acomat nor Roxane, who are the protagonists, could be Greek, Roman or French. — It is believed that the spectators of 1672 saw, in Roxane sacrificing Bajazet to her jealous love, some traits of Queen Christina of Sweden, who caused her favourite Monaldeschi to be assassinated at Fontainebleau in 1657. — After *Bajazet*, Racine's plays no longer bore any dedications; he had no further need for patrons though he was still subjected to the most violent criticism (2).

(1) G. MICHAUT, *La Bérénice de Racine* (Paris, 1907). Cf. the feuilleton by EM. FAGUET in the *Débats* of July 8, 1907.

(2) See in particular Mme de Sévigné's celebrated letter of March 16, 1672, with her dithyramb in favour of Corneille: "Vive donc notre vieil ami Corneille!..."

1673. **Mithridate.** — Racine now returned to historic tragedy. In his *Mithridate*, he had no predecessor to imitate; and he took his subject from Dion Cassius, Appianus and Plutarch. *Mithridate*, king of Pont, has two sons: Xipharès and Pharnace. The first is devoted to him, the second is a traitor, in the pay of the Romans. Both of them are in love with the princess Monime, betrothed to Mithridate. The king shows his sons his plans for a war against the Romans; but when he has Pharnace, whom he suspects, arrested, Pharnace denounces to his father Xipharès' love for Monime. Mithridate, feigning to renounce Monime, draws from her the confession of her love for Xipharès. Meanwhile, the Romans have attacked the city, and Mithridate is victorious, but mortally wounded. While dying, he unites Xipharès and Monime. Racine once more tried an admixture of political events and love. It cannot be said that this time he was as logical as in *Bajazet*, and he has been accused of having lowered *Mithridate*, who, at the height of the struggle against the Romans, seems to turn aside from his vast plans on account of his jealousy as an amorous old man. Furthermore, in order to force *Monime* to declare her preference for *Xipharès*, he used means worthy of comedy, and in fact borrowed from Molière (*L'Avare*). These criticisms are easy to refute, and have been proved entirely wrong (1). However it may be, this tragedy is characterised by the most profound historical sense, as a poet should understand it, and contains one of the most beautiful feminine portrayals in the whole classic drama, *Monime*. Corneille's partisans could do nothing but keep silent. *Mithridate* spoke like César and Sertorius, but never had any of Corneille's women spoken like *Monime*.

1674. **Iphigénie en Aulide.** — The Grecian chiefs, who have united to besiege Trôys, are delayed by a calm; there is no wind, and the fleet cannot sail. They consult the gods. The diviner, Calchas, replies that, in order to obtain favourable winds, they must sacrifice Iphigénie. Now Agamemnon, king of the kings, has a daughter called Iphigénie, whom he has left at Argos; he consents to send for her to the camp at Aulis and to sacrifice her. But at the moment when the play begins, he repents of having consented, and sends a second message to his wife, Clytemnestre, telling her to remain at Argos. This message is not received, and in the second act the mother and daughter arrive. Iphigénie believes she has been sent for to marry Achille, to whom she is betrothed. The mother soon discovers the truth, and refuses to have her daughter sacrificed; Achille threatens Agamemnon for having made false use of his name; Iphigénie, on the contrary, resigns herself to her destiny and approaches the altar. But at the instant when the sacrifice is to begin, Calchas announces that the gods select another Iphigénie, who bears the name of Eriphile and who, being in love with Achilles, was already rejoicing at the thought of the death of Agamemnon's daughter. Eriphile kills herself on the altar; the gods are satisfied, the winds blow and the fleet can depart. What influence caused Racine to return to Euripides, from whom he had borrowed nothing since *Andromaque*, and whom he imitated successively in *Iphigénie* and *Phèdre*? We know that he had in preparation an *Iphigénie en Tauride* (the first act of which, in prose, we possess), and an *Alceste*, a few verses of which he himself quotes in his Preface to *Iphigénie*. This return to Greek antiquity had no doubt some determining cause, but we do not know what.—Rotrou had written an *Iphigénie* in 1640, but Racine owed nothing to him; he followed rather closely his Greek model, preoccupied only in making a mythological action probable; the invention of the character of *Eriphile* enabled him to make use of a misunderstanding and reach a happy denouement. — One of the best written of all Racine's plays, it had great success first at Versailles on August 18, 1674, and at Paris in January, 1675; it accorded with the fastidious and gallant manner in which mythology was then

(1) Cf. especially the BERNARDIN edition of *Mithridate* (Delagrave), and F. HÉMON, *Cours de littérature*, Racine (Delagrave).

understood. An attempt was made to set up against Racine's *Iphigénie* that of Leclerc and Coras, but this effort failed; the latter tragedy is no longer known except through an excellent epigram by Racine.

1677. **Phèdre.** — Racine borrowed his *Phèdre* partly from Euripides' *Hippolyt*, and partially from Seneca's. But this time he went far beyond his models, and in *Phèdre* created a new character, unknown to antiquity, and perhaps his masterpiece in feminine



PHÈDRE AND HIPPOLYTE

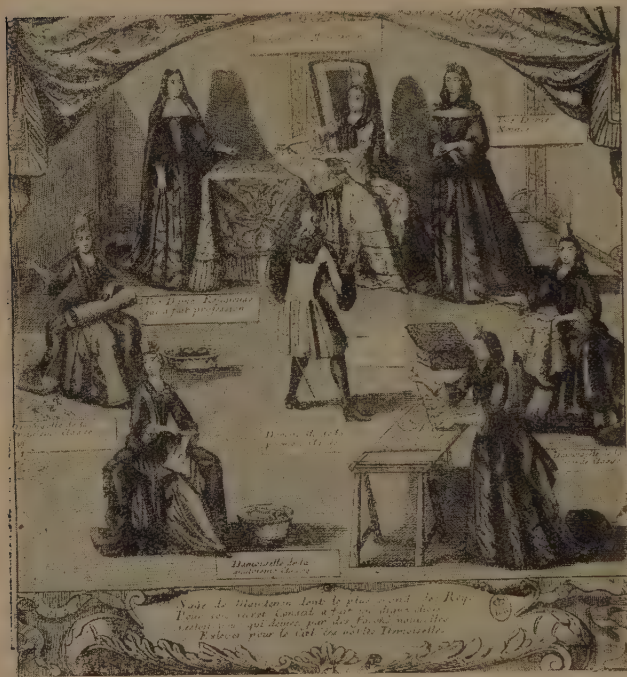
From the picture by Pierre Guérin (1774-1833)

psychology. Euripides only furnished him with an exposition and a denouement; the motives of action are all Racine's. Racine imagines that Phèdre, wife of Thésée, believes her husband to be dead. She comes to recommend her young children to her stepson, Hippolyte, whom she loves; and troubled by his presence she declares her passion. At the same time she is informed that her husband has come back. Full of remorse, she would confess her imprudence to her husband, had she not learned that Hippolyte loves Aricie. Tortured by jealousy, she allows her nurse, Oenone, to accuse Hippolyte to his father. Thésée curses his son, and consigns him to the anger of Neptune. The god sends a marine monster to the young man, which maddens his horses and causes his death. Phèdre, desperate at having brought about this catastrophe, takes poison and comes to die in front of Thésée after having confessed her crime. Some have held, with the great Arnauld, that *Phèdre* was a Christian who only lacked grace. — The same



manceuvres which had been attempted against *Iphigénie* were renewed, and this time succeeded better. The Duchess de Bouillon (Marie-Anne Mancini), her brother Philippe Mancini, Duke de Nevers, and Madame Deshoulières, set up Pradon as a rival to Racine. Pradon had knowledge of Racine's *Phèdre* — we do not know how, but probably by a theatrical scenario — which was then being rehearsed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne; in three months, Pradon patched up his own version, which was acted, a few days after

Racine's, at the Hôtel Guénégaud. In order to cause the failure of Racine's play, his enemies rented all the seats in the two theatres for the first six performances, occupying the boxes at the Guénégaud theatre and leaving those of the Hôtel de Bourgogne empty. Insulting sonnets were exchanged between the two parties, and they promised Racine a beating; the Grand Condé had to intervene to put an end to the quarrel. But as soon as the public had access to the two theatres, Pradon's *Phèdre* fell flat after the seventh performance, while Racine's flourished and began its triumphal career. It is therefore inexact to speak of the "failure of *Phèdre* unless we refer to the *Phèdre* by Pradon." But it is true that Racine was deeply affected by this



MADAME DE MAINTENON SURROUNDED BY LADIES, AND YOUNG  
LADIES OF SAINT-CYR

From an anonymous print of the beginning of the XVIII century.

adventure, and that it was the "drop" which makes the water in the vase run over. He renounced the theatre.—Eleven years passed during which he contented himself with his work as historiographer to the king, and above all with being an excellent father.

1689. *Esther*. — Mme de Maintenon, who allowed her young pupils at Saint-Cyr to act tragedies, thought they had "played *Andromaque* too well", and asked Racine "to write for her, in his leisure moments, some kind of moral or historical poem from which love should be entirely banished." For Racine, this was a command; and yet, he hesitated. At length coming across the subject of *Esther*, he wrote this "*ouvrage prêt à être*



*réclité et chanté*". — Assuérus, king of Persia, has married Esther, niece of the Jew Mardochee, but he does not know that she is a Jewess. Meanwhile, Aman, Prime Minister of Assuérus, has made him sign an order for the extermination of all the Jews to be found in Persia. At the solicitation of Mardochee, Esther confesses her birth to the king, and asks pardon for all the Jews. Assuérus bestows on Esther the pardon of her people, and has Aman hung. We know, from letters of Mme de Sévigné, Mme de La Fayette, and Mme de Caylus, what its success was. To this, the allusions of the play contributed much, though perhaps not foreseen by the author; Mme de Maintenon was compared to Esther, which could not have compromised Racine. But, what was more serious, people chose to see in Aman, Louvois, and in the persecuted Jews, the Jansenists and Protestants, and even went so far as to compare the Grand Arnauld to Mardochee. This play composed for a girls' school, has survived all the circumstances, and without losing anything of its charm and freshness, still belongs to the professional stage. For the first time Racine wrote choruses, and succeeded to perfection.



FRONTISPIECE OF *ATHALIE*

From a small picture in the edition of the *Œuvres* of Racine, published in 1697.

1691. **Athalie.** — The success of *Esther* gave birth to *Athalie*, of which the plot is as follows: Athalie, in order

to wield complete power herself, has had all her children and grand-children killed. One of them, however, escapes—the young Joas, who is brought up in the temple by the highpriest, Joas, and his wife Josabeth. When the play opens, Joas tells Josabeth that he intends to have the young prince crowned that same day, and to overthrow Athalie. The queen, led by a dream; comes to the temple, questions the child herself, and wishes to take him away with her. This is refused; Joas is immediately proclaimed king; the Levites take up arms in his defence; and when Athalie comes to the temple, she is murdered. —The play met with less success than *Esther*, first because the circumstances and conditions of its performance were less favourable, but especially because Racine had gone far beyond the narrow limits and

restrained sentiments proper for his youthful actresses and for their public. After Racine's death, many years had to pass before the greatness of *Athalie* was appreciated. It was not this time an elegy which the poet borrowed from the Bible, it was a true drama, with mysterious depths, both human and divine. Boileau said: "It is your finest work; the public will come back to it." Thus Racine completed his career with an unexpected masterpiece. To his profane genius, formed by a knowledge of the passions of antique times, religion had added a sense of the Beyond. Meditation upon the Bible and the Fathers, memories of the ecstasies of Port-Royal, had mingled, like a new heaven, with his psychology. To this should be added familiarity with the court, and with history, in order to explain certain parts of the roles of Joad and of Abner.

After 1691, Racine wrote nothing else for the theatre, or for Saint-Cyr. He did not even oversee the editions of his plays, but occupied himself entirely with his Christian duties.

**Racine and the Rules.**—To establish Racine's dramatic principles it is enough to read his *Prefaces*;—as, in order to understand Corneille's, we study his *Examens* and his *Discours*. But how different the impressions they make! While Corneille always seems to feel a secret scorn for Aristotle and his school, Racine seems to regard their rules as *necessary conditions* of tragedy. The moral crisis, to which Racine reduced his entire play, far from being interfered with by the three unities, as Corneille's historical actions and intricacies were, owed to them more concentration and force. It really seems as if this method, in preparation ever since the sixteenth century, had been invented for him. He was entirely at home in it. Nor would he enter into any discussion of the question. In his first Preface to *Alexandre*, he rails against "the subtleties of some critics who would subject public taste to the disgust of their own sick brains, who come to the theatre with the firm intention not to be pleased, and think to prove to the rest of the spectators, by their head-shakings and affected grimaces, that they have thoroughly studied the poetics of Aristotle." In the Preface to *Bérénice*, he says: "It must not be supposed that this rule" (simplicity of action) "was only a fancy of those who made it... I conjure them to have a good enough opinion of themselves to believe that a piece which moves them and gives them pleasure cannot have been made absolutely contrary to all rules. The principal rule is to please and touch. All the others are made simply to achieve the first." We shall see that Molière (*Critique de l'école des femmes*, scène VII) and Boileau himself (*Art poétique*, III), express the same idea. And Racine says, in his dedication of *Andromaque* to Henriette d'Angleterre, duchesse d'Orléans: "That I may be permitted to appeal from all the subtleties of their minds to the heart of your Royal Highness."

**Racine's Sources; History and Legend.**—Corneille brought authentic testimony to support the *extraordinary* subjects he chose in order to exalt human will, and in his prefaces as well as his *Examens* he justifies the slightest changes he made in historic facts. Racine borrowed his subjects from Greek

poets like Euripides, from Greek or Roman history, and from Biblical antiquity, only once,—in *Bajazet*—from a contemporary event. He was no less scrupulous than Corneille in explaining, in each of his Prefaces, any modifications he felt obliged to make in history or legend. All these modifications he subordinated, as we shall see, to probability, to the tragic dignity of his characters, to the theory concerning dramatic heroes, that they should be “neither altogether good, nor altogether wicked.” But why so many precautions to excuse himself for the liberties he took : for instance in changing the age of Astyanax, of Britannicus, and of Narcisse; the character of Junie “justified by Seneca in his *Apocolokyntose*; Eriphyle, authorised by Pausanias; Aricie, “not of his own invention,” but who appears in Virgil; Assuérus, explained by Herodotus and Xenophon, etc. ? Let us not be deceived. These Prefaces were written for his enemies, particularly for the partisans of Corneille, who accused Racine of not being so faithful to historical fact as his illustrious rival. Racine wished to show them that he, also, had his authorities. But, in reality, his true pinion lay in the following declarations : “People should not cavil at poets for the changes they have been able to make in fable, but should give their consideration to the excellent use they have made of these changes, and the ingenuity they have shown in accommodating the fable to their subject.” (Second preface to *Andromaque*).

**The Action in Racine's Dramas; Probability.**—Here we touch upon a fundamental difference between the plays of Racine and those of Corneille. Racine said in his Preface to *Bérénice* : “In tragedy, nothing but probability will move the spectator.” Now, what is probability in drama ? The illusion of truth and life in the action and the characters.—We read the account of a crime, and are horrified and surprised. But if we know intimately the authors and the victims of the crime, if we are acquainted with all their antecedents, if we have known their thoughts and sentiments, and especially if we have had a part in the reciprocal development and the successive shocks of their passions, without their knowing it, then everything becomes clear to us and this criminal or monstrous event seems to us the logical and probable consequence of a state of passion.

The point then would be to explain a fact by analysing the passions which produce it; and this probability in general insures probability in the particulars : the progression and necessity of the successive steps.

But this conception of probability could be that of the novel as well. How does it become especially that of the drama ?

1° Racine, instead of enlarging his plot, reduced it to a minimum. In this sense he was in complete disagreement with Corneille and his partisans : “What would be necessary to satisfy such exacting judges ? Instead of a bare and simple action, such a one as might happen in one day only, and which,

advancing by degrees towards the end, is only sustained by the interests, sentiments and passions of the characters, it would be necessary to... etc." (First Preface to *Britannicus*).—"There are those who think that this simplicity shows little invention. They forget that, on the contrary, all invention consists in making something out of nothing, and that a crowd of incidents has always been the refuge of poets who never felt their genius rich and strong enough to hold their spectators' attention through five acts by a simple action, sustained by the violence of the passions, the beauty of the sentiments and the elegance of expression." (Preface to *Bérénice*).—"To make something of nothing", that is what must be well understood. Racine's five acts are consecrated to the analysis of the final crisis, which supposes previous crises. The exposition shows us through what circumstances the characters are found, even from the beginning of the play, in an excited condition. For instance, in the beginning of *Andromaque*, we are told that "for more than six months" Pyrrhus has hesitated to marry Hermione, because he loves Andromaque, and that Andromaque, in spite of Pyrrhus' threats towards the little Astyanax, succeeds in obtaining new delays, without committing herself. And why does the tragedy begin now? After this series of crises, what will bring about the last one, the one which will result in the catastrophe? It is the arrival of Oreste: that is the first step. Oreste demands a decision from Pyrrhus; the latter demands an immediate answer from Andromaque; and the denouement follows logically upon Andromaque's yes. But between that first fact (Oreste's arrival), and the final fact (the death of Pyrrhus and Hermione), nothing happens; and it is this space, empty of events, which Racine fills with his tragedy. We readily understand that the three unities are the necessary frame for such dramas.

2° On the other hand, Racine avoids with the greatest care "putting anything on the stage which is not absolutely necessary. The most beautiful scenes are in danger of becoming tiresome, if they can be separated from the action itself, and interrupt instead of facilitate the progress towards the denouement," (Preface to *Mithridate*). And this remark is directed against the episodic scenes of Corneille. But it is also necessary that the action should be complete; and to those who criticised him for the fifth act of *Britannicus*, he replied: "I have always understood that tragedy is the reproduction of a complete action involving several persons, and that the action is never finished until we know in what situation it leaves these persons." (First Preface to *Britannicus*).

3° Throughout his drama Racine is anxious to link together all the changes, by a sequence of actions and reactions, and to base all the variations of sentiment on psychological causes. The type of this kind of action is *Andromaque*, the formula of which is a statement in proportion; "Hermione is to Oreste what Andromaque is to Pyrrhus." But the other pieces are equally well constructed, in the sense that all changes of situation rest upon changes of sentiments: if Roxane, who loves Bajazet, decides to give him up, it is because



she has discovered his love for Atalide;—if Titus sends Bérénice away, it is because in him the duty of a king overcomes love;—if Neron kills Britannicus, it is to rid himself of a rival and of the guardianship of his mother, etc. In Racine, this results in a striking coherence, an uninterrupted sequence which is inherent in the action, and not an artifice of craftsmanship.

4° From this results also the completeness and logicalness of his denouements which, prepared from the very exposition of the drama, are the inevitable consequences of the conflicts between violent passions. This logic is all the more admirable because it results from "the reason of the heart which the reason of the brain does not know." From this point of view may be studied the characters of *Hermione*, *Roxane* and *Phèdre*, and those of *Néron* and *Mithridate*.—It was to satisfy the merely human demands of his spectators that Racine eliminated from his denouements all external intervention and all marvellous. We know how he transformed and made natural the denouement of *Iphigénie*. He guards against attributing the death of the young prince, in *Bajazet*, to the return of his brother, *Amurat*; *Roxane's* jealousy must be the sole cause. *Monime* must belong to *Xipharès* without the intervention of the Roman being necessary; and he brings the dying *Mithridate* upon the stage that he may give *Monime* to his son.



ANDROMAQUE AND PYRRIUS

From a small picture, engraved by F. Chauveau, in the edition of the Works of Racine, published in 1697.

**The passions. Love, jealousy, gallantry.**—It is not true to say that Racine only portrayed love. He knew how to depict political ambition in men and women : Mithridate, Acomat, Agamemnon, Malthan, Aman, Agrippine, Athalie. In Joad and Abner he incarnates various forms of religious sentiment and honesty. In Burrhus, Narcisse, Ulysse, how many nuances we find that betray a deep knowledge of courts and diplomacy. Andromaque represents conjugal fidelity and maternal love. None of these characters is weak. And it may be said that there is no human passion which Racine has not known and analysed. —But it is true to say the mainspring of his tragedies is love. How did he understand and analyse it?

1<sup>o</sup> Voltaire was impertinent, surely, and forced the note, when he wrote on the Xipharès, the Hippolytes, etc., the celebrated stanzas which end with these two lines :

Et l'Amour, qui marche à leur suite,  
Les croit des courtisans français (1).

There is, however, some truth in this sally. At the theatre, the public always listens breathlessly to Hermione or Andromaque, Agrippine or Néron, Roxane, Phèdre and Athalie, but grows respectfully indifferent during the amorous discourses of an Atalide, an Aricie, Xipharès or Antiochus. Here, indeed, pure passion gives place to amorous rhetoric, and in this respect Racine announces Marivaux. It could not be otherwise. Love, when it is reserved, when it veils itself or ignores its own existence—when it hesitates and is prudent, when it seeks to eliminate from its own expression all that might offend, shock or surprise, such love is of its own nature more or less hypocritical. Its role is to seduce, to deceive, to creep into the heart of its victim, and it succeeds by using a knowing coquetry and studied language. Now, the processes of coquetry, solely because women are its arbiters, quickly change their fashion; and in order to please, it is always necessary to exaggerate the fashion somewhat, to carry politeness as far as *préciosité*, fervour to romantic folly, and respect to platonic mysticism. On the other hand, as soon as the new manner, which yesterday was seductive because of its unexpected originality, has passed into books or upon the stage, an intelligent woman laughs at a suitor who tries to woo her with formulas learned by heart. From this results, in the case of gallantry, a perpetual renewing, an incessant search after novelty, and, for the poet who depicts the love of lovers, the fatal necessity to repeat a jargon which pleases to-day and to-morrow seems insipid or worn out. In fact, in this sort of love, nature cannot be painted at all. In love, nature only begins with passions. *Hermione* is natural, *Phèdre* is natural; but *Aricie* and *Hippolyte* talk about love as people did in the Paris salons of 1667. So Racine, when he brings his young men and young women on

(1) VOLTAIRE, *le Temple du goût*.

the stage, must submit to the same law to which Shakespeare himself bowed. 2° But here, now, is the particular in which he equals the best of Shakespeare, and in which he rises to the height of really divine genius above all other French dramatic poets : while Corneille himself, while Voltaire and Victor Hugo did not abandon the conventional language of love of their day even when they wished to express passionate love, Racine in the same circumstances became



THE PLAYING OF AN OPERA, AT VERSAILLES.

*From the print by Jean Lepautre (1618-1682).*

The opera Alceste, by Lulli, in 1664, in the Marble Court at the fêtes said the *Plaisirs de l'île enchantée*.

The staging of a tragedy was obviously the same as that of an opera.

nature itself. Art, elegance, and metaphors disappear ; it is life which reveals itself with such powerful simplicity that the reader becomes entirely unconscious that it is a literary work before him, written at a certain date. But how does he succeed in giving this naturalness and power to passionate love ?—By jealousy. Jealousy, in a heart which is resigned, may be one of those kinds of suffering which kill slowly ; in a proud and vindictive heart, it becomes fury. No passion can better prepare and explain a tragic denouement. La Bruyère said “ We wish to make all the happiness, or, if that cannot be, all the unhap-



piness, of the one we love." (*Du Cœur*). Was he thinking of *Hermione* when he wrote that thought?—Love, to be tragic, must be suffering; it must pass alternately from hope to despair; it must lead to the conviction that one is misunderstood, repaid with ingratitude, betrayed, and that one must be revenged; and all these elements are found in jealous love, but not in happy or gallant love. Add to this, that there is no form of love more universally understood



PORTRAITS OF RACINE

Drawn on the cover of a *Horace* by his eldest son Jean-Baptiste

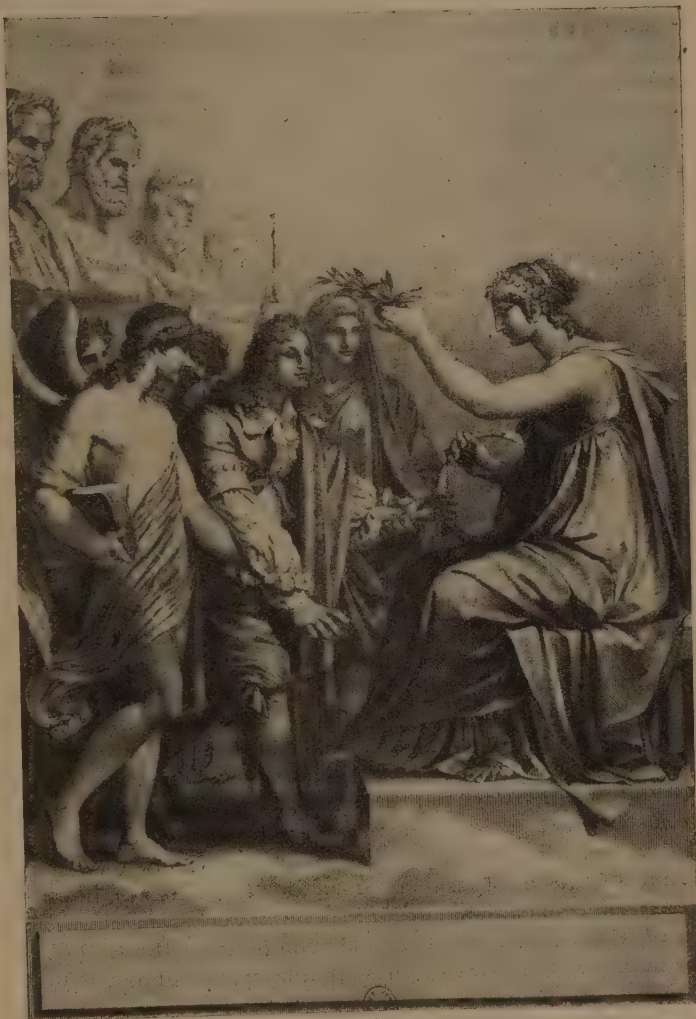
and felt, because the basis of jealousy is egotism.—So Racine uses it everywhere. In all his tragedies, love is saved from gallant insipidity by the introduction of jealousy, and by this means the flagging action is renewed.—*Antiochus*, in *Bérénice*, represents resigned jealousy; *Mithridate* is the jealous old man; *Néron* is the jealous brute; *Eriphile* is jealous through scorn, *Roxane* and *Phèdre* by temperament. But the complete type is *Hermione*: pride, egotism, blindness, reaction after the crime and union in death, all the phases of jealousy are there. The “*Qui te l’a dit?*” of *Hermione* is psychologically sublime, as the “*Qu’il rût!*” of *Horace* is the sublimity of sentiment.



**Racine as Imitator of the Ancients, and Innovator.** — The respect with which Racine speaks of the ancients has often led to deception with regard to his own originality.

We have already seen that out of eleven tragedies, four only (*Thébaïde*, *Andromaque*, *Iphigénie* and *Phèdre*) are imitated from Greek pieces. In *Britannicus* he was inspired by Tacitus; in *Mithridate*, by several historians; in *Esther* and *Athalie*, by the Bible. Finally, we may say that for *Bérénice* and *Bajazet* he found everything in himself.

How has he welded or juxtaposed his borrowings and his own observations ?



RACINE CROWNED BY IMMORTALITY

From the composition by P. P. Prudhon (died in 1823) engraved by Marais.

1° Racine borrowed from the ancients *psychological states* of mind, and, to a certain extent, the situations which furnished motives for and explanations of them. With regard to certain passions, the ancients have left us portrayals whose absolute truth is guaranteed by the fact that, after so many turmoils and changes, we still can recognise in them true human nature. Consequently, nothing could be more legitimate than to borrow from them this first, vigorous drawing, made with true simplicity and ideal beauty, which we should find it difficult to reproduce ourselves if we endeavoured to draw from life. But, in imitating the ancients, we should be on our guard against the temptation to preserve—unless for scientific literary purposes, features which belong essentially to a departed civilisation, and which would either not be understood by our contemporaries, or could not be harmonised with more recently discovered features.

2° On the other hand, the modern poet, in order to complete and enrich the very simple psychology of the ancients, will add everything that sentiment or passion have gained in their development during the interval between the ancients and ourselves. And here confront another and more specious danger. Formerly, it was comparatively easy to distinguish, for instance, in Homer or Euripides, between the absolute and the relative, the true and the ephemeral, but now the poet is in danger of confusing a superficial aspect of passion, a fashion of feeling, a jargon which may be mocked to-morrow, with the genuine acquisitions made by the human heart since the time of the model which he is imitating down to the moment when he himself is writing.

So, when Racine conceived the character of *Andromaque*, it may be said that he combined in a complex and living whole the ancient features and the modern nuances of maternal and conjugal love. It was the same when he added jealousy and remorse to the character of *Phèdre*. In such roles, as in those of *Néron*, *Agrippine* and *Athalie*, Racine has only taken from antiquity what was human, and has added nothing but durable qualities.

3° But was it always so? Did he not sometimes preserve some elements too exclusively antique, and which could not be set beside modern traits without the sacrifice of probability? And did he not endow with contemporary traits destined to go out of fashion, some of his tragic heroes, in whom relative probability spoils the absolute truth?

In *Iphigénie*, the evident contradiction between the subject of the piece and the morals of the characters has often been pointed out.

In fact, this human sacrifice, whose horror, in spite of the poet's art, obsesses the mind of the spectator from the first scene, is not and ought not to be one of those probable passionate catastrophes which are always probable (so long as they have been properly led up to) whatever may be the civilisation of the individuals. Very polite, gallant and even majestic people may little by little be brought under the control of a passion, skilfully graduated, until they find

themselves instinctive and impulsive even to the brutality of assassination. But in *Iphigénie*, by a singular mode of reasoning for which the milieu is altogether responsible, Racine, in order to make this murder of a young girl probable, is preoccupied with one single idea, namely, how to avoid the use of the marvellous! He believes that in this only would lie the improbability. To avoid Diana, he invents the romantic *Eriphile*. And he did not dream that it was the marvellous only that would save the subject, by transporting us frankly to a prehistoric legendary epoch, in which warriors could regard the sacrifice of a virgin to the divinity as legitimate. He has created this other fatal improbability, in presenting, as the authors of this deliberate murder, kings and diplomats in the style of Louis XIV, in a society where young girls receive the perfect education of *Iphigénie*, and the Achilles combine the chivalric bravery of a Condé with the gallantry of a Lauzun... Would it increase the glory of Racine to deny that here we certainly find incongruities?

I hardly dare insinuate that even *Phèdre* seems to offer a few contradictions to an unprejudiced mind. But here there are only a few isolated details, mythological allusions in the taste of his time, certain embellishments which Racine would suppress to-day. And perhaps he wished to modernise his subject completely; in which case verbal poetry would lose somewhat, no doubt, but certainly the unity of the piece would gain. For there is no play of Racine's in which he reached a higher degree of realism: where psychology borders upon physiology. And the reader will agree that the memories of Crete with its labyrinth, the descent of *Thésée* into Hades, and the monster too well described by *Thérémène*, do not combine harmoniously with the bold depiction of a true passion. *Bajazet*, assuredly, is not superior to *Phèdre*; but, on the stage, it is one of Racine's plays which show the greatest unity and candour, because learning never interposes to spoil the effect of life.

**Racine's Style.** — Voltaire wanted the words "Beautiful, sublime, admirable" to be written on every one of Racine's pages.—In fact, the reading of Racine does create at first a general impression of harmony, of precision, of restrained and continuous poetry. But his plays must be judged above all on the stage; or, at least, one must know how to read them as the work of an author who wrote his verses "to go over the foot lights." His style, so perfect in the reading, does not reveal its appropriate qualities except when the characters speak. It is, first of all, exact, in the sense that all the analyses of sentiments, all the nuances are made perfectly clear and distinct to us. Then, it is appropriate to the situations: elegant, when used by *Britannicus*, *Pyrrhus* or *Xipharès*, supple and insinuating with *Narcisse* or *Mathan*, violent or superb with *Agrippine* or *Athalie*, tender and elegiac with *Andromaque* or *Monime*, while, with *Agamemnon* or *Joad*, it acquires an amazing degree of majesty and power. But let us admit that, in the quiet passages, this style often seems too distin-

guished; the figures and metaphors are too well balanced; the inversions smack of art. This style is most astonishing, that is to say, we are less conscious of its being style at all, when the characters are animated by "*la passion toute pure*". *Hermione*, *Roxane*, *Phèdre*, *Agrippine*, *Joad*, etc., when they become extremely impassioned, cast aside all elegance and the whole rhetorical apparatus. Inversion and anacoluthon are no longer figures of speech; they are, so to speak, involuntary, and accord with the tumult of the heart. Furthermore, the language, by its direct force, descends to the trivial: and this is nature.

Racine's versification is simple and dramatic, without effort, always harmonious, and in impassioned moments, very vigorous.

**Racine's Prose Works.** — Racine is an excellent prose writer. We have numbers of his *Letters*—those he wrote during his sojourn at Uzès, from 1661-1662, to Abbé Le Vasseur, to Vitart, etc.;—those he exchanged with Boileau from 1687-1699;—and those he addressed to his son Jean-Baptiste. The first are as piquantly charming as the others are simply and tenderly serious; and all of them are intelligent.—We possess a few fragments only of the *Histoire de Louis XII*, which Racine wrote in collaboration with Boileau and Valincourt. The greater part of it was destroyed by fire.—But an exact idea of Racine's work in prose and as an historian, can be given by his *Abrégé de l'histoire de Port-Royal*, published after his death. Here, in sober language, with exquisite delicacy, he pleads, without seeming to do so, for his dear Port-Royal. It is an admirable "*mémoire d'avocat*".—Finally, let us note, among his academical discourses, his reply to Thomas Corneille in 1684, which contains a magnificent and altogether critical eulogium of the great Corneille (1).

## CONTEMPORARIES AND SUCCESSORS OF RACINE.

Racine, surrounded as he was by writers who attempted to rival him in the favour of the public, was not isolated in his time as he is in literature. Primarily, let us remember that Corneille, between 1664 and 1674, produced numerous tragedies, not his best doubtless, but which were protected by his great name. *Suréna*, the last, was produced the same year as *Iphigénie*.—**THOMAS CORNEILLE**, whom we have already mentioned, met with the greatest success; he produced in 1672 (the same year with *Bajazet*) his *Ariane*, and in 1678 (one year after *Phèdre*) his *Comte d'Essex*.

**QUINAULT** (1633-1688) was a mediocre tragic poet, whose *Astrate* (1663) deserved Boileau's raillery; but he composed opera libretti (*Proserpine*, *Ar-*

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 654.



vide, etc.), for which Lully wrote the music, and which are remarkable for the harmony and sweetness of the versification.

**PRADON** (1632-1698) has been saved from oblivion by his *Phèdre*. But he wrote a great number of tragedies, of which the least bad is *Régulus* (1688).

We may also mention the *Germanicus* of **Boursault** (1679), **Mme Deshoulières' Genséric** (1680), tragedies by **La Chapelle**; **Mlle Bernard**, etc., not because even their titles ought to be preserved, but in order to show the reader to what an extent tragedies were in favour.

Racine had two very compromising imitators in **CAMPISTRON** (1656-1723) and **LA GRANGE-CHANCEL** (1677-1758). We shall again refer to them in the chapter on tragedy in the eighteenth century.

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BOTTOM OF LAMP BY SEBASTIEN LE CLERC (1637-1714)



TRIUMPH OF BACCHUS

Decorative frieze by Jean Lepautre (1618-1682).

## CHAPTER X.

# MOLIÈRE AND COMEDY IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

### SUMMARY

1° **BEFORE MOLIÈRE**, CORNEILLE produced a model for good comedy in *Le Menteur* (1643); ROTROU wrote *La Sœur* (1665); Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, *Les Visionnaires* (1637); SCARRON, *Jodelet* (1665), etc.

**THE ITALIAN ACTORS** played, from the sixteenth century, on a repertory which was imitated by French writers until the end of the eighteenth century: plots and *types* were borrowed from them.

3° **MOLIÈRE** (1622-1673) first founded in Paris *L'illustre théâtre*; then travelled in the provinces with his troupe, and returned to the metropolis to stay in 1658. He produced all his pieces between 1653 and 1673, and died while playing *Le Malade imaginaire*.—He was patronised by Louis XIV, who frequently demanded plays from him for court fêtes.—Molière intended to please both the great lords and the parterre.—He observed his time and depicted its absurdities, but he knew mankind of all times, and no painter from life was ever more true; and his comedies are therefore true *dramas*. His morals are those of *experience*; he was the "lawmaker for good breeding."—His style is that of a *writer for the theatre*, who makes each character speak the language of his own social condition.

4° **AFTER MOLIÈRE**, BOURSULT, BARON, etc. The "Comédie-Française" was established in 1680 by the fusion of different troupes.

## I. — BEFORE MOLIÈRE.



DECORATED LETTER  
by Fr. Chauveau.

ORNEILLE'S *Le menteur* appeared in 1643. An anecdote, not absolutely authentic, attributes this remark to Molière: "Without *Le menteur*, I should doubtless have written a few comedies of intrigue, but perhaps I might never have written *Le misanthrope*." When we examine the comedies which were acted between *Le menteur* and *L'étourdi*, during a period of ten years, we are surprised to find so few works worthy of esteem, and are led to the conclusion that Molière's real precursor was Corneille.

But both before and after *Le menteur*, the public had not been altogether deprived of amusing comedies, with good plots, and agreeable versification, parts of which might have inspired Molière.

**ROTROU** composed no less than thirteen comedies, the greater part imitated from the Spanish (these are the least good), and three drawn from Plautus: *Les Menechmes* (1632)—which may be compared with the *Menechmes* of Regnard, (1705),—*Les Sosies* (1636)—which may be compared with *L'amphitryon* of Molière, (1668);—*Les Captifs* (1638); finally, the best one, which was imitated from the Italian play *La Sorella* by J.B. della Porta, and entitled *La Sœur* (1645). This comedy may still be read with pleasure, and when we remember its date, and the age of the author, we cannot but regret once more the premature death of Rotrou.

**DESMARETS DE SAINT-SORLIN** (1595-1676), is one of those writers who are worth more than their reputation; we shall revert to him when dealing with the "Quarrel between the ancients and the moderns." He has the credit of having written a satiric comedy, founded on observation of the morals and absurdities of the day, *Les Visionnaires* (1637), from which Molière partly took the character of *Bélise*, in his *Femmes savantes*: the *Hespérie* of Desmarets believes, like *Bélise*, that everybody is in love with her. In the character of the poet *Amidor* we also find a few traits of *Trissotin* (1).

**SCARRON** (1610-1660) occupies a special place in the history of comic drama of the seventeenth century. He represents the burlesque genre, which is the protest of individualism and unlimited fancy against the spirit of discipline and worldly propriety. Scarron, who was famous for his infirmity, for his

(1) Read fragments of *Les Visionnaires* in the *Théâtre choisi des auteurs comiques des dix-septième et dix-huitième siècles* by H. PARIGOT (Delagrave).

marriage to Françoise d'Aubigné, the future Mme de Maintenon, and by his slightly affected good humour, cultivated every form of burlesque: he wrote the *Virgile travesti* (a laborious parody of the *Æneid*), *Le Roman Comique* (elsewhere referred to), *Tales*, which Molière bore in mind when writing his *L'École des femmes* and *Tartuffe*, and some comedies. His best comedies are *Jodelet ou le Maître-Valet* (1645) and *Don Japhet d'Arménie* (1653); the latter, borrowed from the Spanish of Tirso de Molina, introduces Charles the Fifth's old buffoon and shows him beaten and tossed in a blanket by people whom he had teased. The humour is forced and leaves us indifferent; but the piece had an amazing success when it first appeared, and even later, until the middle of the eighteenth century. Nowadays Scarron's versification (some of whose methods we find in modern burlesque writers like Jean Richépin, A Morand, E. Rostand, and Catulle Mendès) is rather amusing reading (1).

**THOMAS CORNEILLE** (1625-1709) received as much applause for his comedies as for his tragedies. He produced a great many pieces imitated from Spanish models, the best of which are *Don Bertrand de Cigarral* (1653), after Don F. de Rojas, and *Le géolier de soi-même* (1655). Imbroglions and blunders abound in Corneille's work. His style has some humorous quality; less unexpected than Scarron's, it is clearer and more brilliant (2).

**BOISROBERT** (1592-1662) deserves remembrance for his *Belle Plaideuse* (1654), a play in which it is a pleasure to find, in place of Spanish or Italian extravagance, some direct observation of morals and society. Molière borrowed from him one of the strongest situations in his *Avare*; the father usurer finds his own son in the person of the borrower whom he is about to exploit (3).

**QUINAULT** (1635-1688), who made his début as a writer of comedies, produced in 1665 *La Mère Coquette*, a very charming play, the versification of which still seems attractive, and which held its place for a long time in the theatrical repertory.

Finally, *Le Pédant joué*, by **Cyrano de Bergerac** (1634), furnished Molière with his "scène de la galère" in the *Fourberies de Scapin* (4).

## II. — ITALIAN COMEDY IN FRANCE.

Troupes of Italian comedians established themselves in France under Henri III. Molière, in his youth, could have seen performances in Paris by a few of the most celebrated ones, such as Scaramouche and Trivelin. During his stay in

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 518.

(2) H. PARIGOT, p. 129.

(3) *Id.*, p. 153.

(4) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 514.



Lyons, also, he saw a series of representations given by Italian troupes. When at length he returned to Paris, he found the theatre of the Petit-Bourbon occupied by Italian actors, and his plays were given alternately with theirs. In a study of Molière, therefore, we cannot omit a reference to Italian comedy, the more so as he not only borrowed subjects from this source, but also methods for managing intrigue, and style. The genre in which the Italians excelled was



AN ITALIAN FARCE IN THE XVII CENTURY  
From a picture of the Museum of the French-Comedy.

the *comedia dell'arte*, derived, it is believed, from the old *atellanae*. Fixed types, such as *Pantolon*, the *Docteur*, the *Capitan*, *Horace*, *Isabelle*, *Francisque*, to which must be added local types like *Polichinelle* (Neapolitan), *Arlequin* (of Bologna), etc., reappear in all these pieces. The plot was arranged beforehand, but the actors improvised the dialogue. Doubtless, they had plenty of wit, but they soon made a collection of dramatic commonplaces, which could be easily adjusted to different scenes. And when they had played the same piece ten or twenty times, they must have known their improvisations by heart. The greater part of these comedies dealt with old guardians befooled, jealous people deceived,

pedants tricked. They are especially remarkable for the liveliness of the action; but the characters are mere sketches (1).

### III. — MOLIÈRE (1622-1673).

**Biography.**— **Infancy and Youth** (1622-1643).—Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, called Molière, was born in Paris on the fourteenth or fifteenth of January 1622 (2). His father, Jean Poquelin, had a shop under the pillars of the municipal market, at the sign of Saint-Christophe, and was *valet-de-chambre* and upholsterer-in-ordinary to the king. His mother, Marie Cressé, died when he was in his eleventh year.

Jean-Baptiste was reared, therefore, to begin with, in an altogether Parisian, bourgeois and popular milieu, which gave him his true conception of common people. Perhaps we may attribute to the early loss of maternal affection his characters of proud mothers and stepmothers; and to the petty vanity and avariciousness of his father his roles of *Jourdain* and *Harpagon*.

To these early impressions, Jean-Baptiste soon added classical culture. A student at the most celebrated of Parisian colleges, *Clermont*, which was conducted by the Jesuits, he worked hard at his books from 1636 to 1644. There, too, he was enabled to observe a world which was quite new to him, as this very fashionable college was frequented by the sons of the greatest lords. It is there that, according to a tradition, he became acquainted with the young Prince de Conti, who was later to become the patron of his travelling troupe. Then also he knew the philosopher Gassendi (3), one of the boldest minds of the century, to whom no doubt he owed his broad and natural philosophy, bordering upon Epicureanism.

When he had completed his studies, his father made him study law, and it is possible that he bought for him a diploma at the University of Orléans. After so many sacrifices, for aims almost above his station, he wished only to prepare Molière to be his successor as upholsterer to the king. It is thought that Jean-Baptiste did, in fact, replace his father in 1642 during the journey of the court to Narbonne. But the son felt no interest in making armchairs or hanging wall-paper, and for some time had had a taste for the theatre. When he was still

(1) Respecting Italian comedy, cf. L. MOLAND, *Molière et la Comédie italienne*, Paris, 1867.

(2) In spite of the researches and discussions of the students of *Molière*, it is not known if Molière was born in the rue des Vieilles-Étuves (now rue Sauval) in a house numbered 96 of the rue Saint-Honoré, or in the rue de la Tonnellerie (rue du Pont-Neuf), number 31. — For a long time each house bore a commemorative tablet; but it seems that the second is considered right. (Cf. LARROUMET, *La Comédie de Molière*, Paris, 1887, p. 6.)

Concerning questions pertaining to the biography and the plays of Molière, the reader is referred once for all to the *Théâtre choisi de Molière* (Hatier), where a point has been made of giving the latest results of criticisms upon these subjects.

(3) Gassendi (1592-1655) is celebrated for his quarrel with Descartes (Concerning Molière and Gassendi, cf. LARROUMET, p. 325.)



MOLIÈRE, IN THE ROLE OF JULIUS CÉSAR

(*La Mort de Pompée* by Corneille.)

From the portrait painted by Pierre Mignard (1610-1695).

very young, his grandfather Cressé took him on the *Pont-Neuf* to see Tabarin and his stage on trestles, or to the *Hôtel de Bourgogne*, or the *Foire Saint-Germain*.

**Foundation of the "Illustre Théâtre" (1643).** — So, in 1643, Molière demanded of his father the money he inherited from his mother, 630 livres, and entered into a contract with the Bédarts and a few of their friends to found the troupe of the *Illustre Théâtre*. The Bédarts then numbered four: Joseph, Louis (who was lame, but continued to play the roles of valets in Molière's troupe at Paris; which is why *Harpagon* calls *La Flèche* "ce chien de boiteux!") Madeleine, and Geneviève; and another girl, named Armande, who must have been born in 1643. It was at the time he founded the *Illustre Théâtre* that Jean-Baptiste took the name of Molière (1).

During the years 1643 and 1644, the new troupe tried in vain to secure a public. We find them successively established at the tennis-ground of the Métayers, near the Nesles gate (at the angle of the *rue de Seine* and *Mazarine*), from which they were turned out by the University taking possession of the ground for the erection of the Mazarin college (now the Palace of the Institute of France), then at the Marais, on the tennis-ground of the *Croix-Noire*, near the Saint-Paul gate (quai des Célestins); finally, perhaps, once more on the left bank, on the tennis ground of the *Croix-Blanche* (*carrefour de Buci*). But the *Illustre Théâtre* did not succeed anywhere. Increasing debts resulted in the seizure of their possessions, and the imprisonment of Molière in the Châtelet, and it was then that the troupe decided to leave Paris for the Provinces at the end of 1645.

**Molière in the Provinces (1645-1658).** — But first the troupe joined another, Charles du Fresne's, already well-known, and this union was not severed until about 1650. We learn, in Scarron's *Le Roman Comique*, what the life of travelling actors was at that period. Though Scarron assuredly did not write the history of Molière, many features of his novel apply equally well to Molière and his companions, though with many reservations. In spite of the most minute research, it remains impossible to follow, year after year, and journey after journey Molière's peregrinations (2).

(1) There was a *François de Molière*, writer of many novels, who was assassinated in 1623. Was it in memory of the reading of one of his books that Jean-Baptiste Poquelin took his name? It must be remembered that nearly all "fils de famille", who followed a theatrical vocation, took pseudonyms.

(2) His presence has been noted at Toulouse in 1647, and Albi and Carcassonne; in 1648 at Nantes; in 1649 at Toulouse and Narbonne; in 1650 at Agen and Pézenas... "In 1652", says M. E. Rigal, "Molière having become gradually the leader of the troupe, is at Lyons, and establishes his headquarters there. During five or six years, from 1652-1658, he made some excursions. We find him several times in Languedoc, at Vienne in Dauphiné, at Dijon, Avignon, Grenoble, even at Bordeaux; but he always returned to Lyons, and when he definitely left that city, it was to return to Paris, stopping at Rouen on the way..." We must particularly note the representations given by Molière's troupe during the session of the States of Languedoc, at Pézenas in 1650, at Carcassonne in 1651,



What was his provincial repertory? First, it very probably contained many pieces, serious or comic, by fashionable authors. We know that he gave *Nicomède* at Bordeaux; and he must have included in his repertory other plays by Corneille, Du Ryer, Tristan, Rotrou, Thomas Corneille, etc. Evidently, the study of all this contemporary production must have given Molière a foundation of dramatic knowledge which nothing else could have done. After having acted the work of all the authors of his time, he was thoroughly familiar with all their methods and styles. He soon began to add plays of his own composition—tragedies (a *Thébaïde*?), comedies after Italian models (like *L'Étourdi* and *Le Dépit amoureux*), and farces, in which he excelled (2). So, though we do not know all the details of his work in the twelve years between 1646 and 1658, we know that Molière presented the whole of the contemporary theatrical repertory, and himself wrote plays of all kinds.

But what he owed above everything to this long sojourn in the provinces was the opportunity to observe manners and characters. Had he remained in Paris, Molière would never have known so many original types. The provinces, less enslaved to etiquette, where life was simpler and freer, and where types and costumes changed from place to place, offered a field of observation by which Molière knew how to profit. He has been described as listening to the conversations in the barber's shop at Pézenas, and he must have gathered his notes in this way wherever he stayed. His dramas were to present more accentuated types, done in higher relief, than could have been found in Paris at that time. It was the provinces which furnished him with not only *Gorgibus* and *M. de Pourceaugnac*, but with all that is most vivid in *Chrysale*, in *M. Jourdain* and perhaps in *Tartuffe*.

**Molière at Paris (1658-1673).**—Finally Molière returned to Paris in 1658, bringing with him two comedies, *L'Étourdi* and *Le Dépit amoureux*, and a number of farces. He was permitted to give a performance before the court at the Louvre on October 24, 1658, where he presented *Nicomède* (as an actor, he played tragic roles) (3), and *Le Docteur amoureux*. The troupe was judged to be excellent in comedy, and the king gave Molière the hall of the *Petit-Bourbon* in

and again at Pézenas in 1653. In that year Molière met again his old fellow-student at the Clermont College, the Prince de Conti. The latter, charmed with Molière and his troupe, made him come to Montpellier in 1653, 1654 and 1655, and again to Pézenas in 1655 and 1657. M. E. Rigal is therefore right in saying that Molière's situation, and that of his troupe, was not the same as that of ordinary travelling actors of the time, and that Molière was already "in a way, a personage." E. RIGAL, *Molière*, Paris 1908.

(2) We possess two of these farces: *Le Médecin volant* and *La Jalousie du Barbouillé*; the titles of several others are known, such as *Le Docteur amoureux*, *Les Trois Docteurs rivaux*, *Gorgibus dans le sac*, *Le Fagoteux*, etc. They suggest several of his future comedies.

(3) The best-known portrait of Molière, by Mignard, represents him in the costume of Cæsar in *La Mort de Pompée*. In reading the imitations of actors of the Hotel de Bourgogne, found in *L'Imromptu de Versailles*, we conclude that Molière, as a tragedian, used simple and natural diction instead of the *psalmody* customary among the great actors of the day.

the Louvre itself, with the title of *Troupe de Monsieur*, and a pension. It was in the *Petit-Bourbon* that Molière presented, in 1659, *Les Précieuses ridicules*. But in the following year, M. de Rataubon, the king's architect, expelled Molière, the *Petit-Bourbon* was demolished, and work was begun on the colonnade of the Louvre. Molière thought for a time, no doubt, that the peregrinations of *L'Illustre Théâtre* would have to be begun again; but Monsieur permitted him to establish himself in the auditorium of the Palais-Royal, which Richelieu had constructed, and there Molière gave performances of all his plays, and there he died (1).

It will be sufficient, at this point, to note a few essential details in Molière's biography, the history of his plays being given separately.—He married in 1662 Armande Béjart, whose coquetry seems to have caused him much suffering (2). In 1664, his son was born, to whom the king consented to be godfather. Louis XIV also protected Molière from his enemies, and often summoned him to court to give a performance of some play, or to compose something for a special occasion. The king's protection should be estimated at its actual value to Molière; it must certainly have obstructed his more serious work by forcing him to compose hasty plays in the taste of the time, like *Mélicerte*, *Les Amants magnifiques*, etc.; but, even at this price, he gained great advantages from it. Admitted to court on a footing of familiarity, he could closely observe the originals of the *petits marquis* and great lords whom he set on the stage; and it was chiefly on account of this royal support that he could venture to jest at the nobility, not only for their external absurdities, but also their vices (3).

Molière's life appears to have been one of extraordinary activity. Director of the troupe (and we know from his confidences in *L'Impromptu* what a difficult task it was), an actor always on the stage, and an author, he had no rest. We are amazed to find that he could, between 1658 and 1673, compose more than twenty works, several of which were in five acts and in verse! He must have been able, to rhyme with singular ease as Boileau congratulated him upon doing. No doubt he earned a great amount of money. It is said that he had thirty thousand livres income; and the inventory made after his death bespoke a comfortable and artistic home. His character was rather melancholy; he made others laugh, but did not laugh himself. He had a kind heart, was charitable, according to Grimarest, was "born full of tenderness," and he was tolerant, and a faithful friend. Of a delicate constitution, inclined to hypochondria (which we now call neurasthenia), he was nearly always ill, and resented the failure of physicians to cure him. We know how he died on the stage, during the

(1) This auditorium must not be confused with the Montausier theatre, still at the Palais-Royal. The hall in which Molière acted, was used a long time for the sessions of the Court of Accounts; it is reached by the Montpensier peristyle, behind the Theatre-Français.

(2) Cf. LARROUMET, p. 119. Concerning this, see the very judicious observations of M. E. Rigal, vol. I, introduction.

(3) Cf. LARROUMET, chap. v (*Molière et Louis XIV*), and especially E. RIGAL (*passim*).

fourth representation of *Le Malade imaginaire*, being taken with a convulsion and the spitting of blood. He was carried home, where he died during the night. The house where his death occurred, stood on the site of No. 40 of the rue de Richelieu. Being an actor, Molière had been excommunicated; and to



SCENERY AND COMIQUE ACTORS AT THE THEATRE OF THE HOTEL DE BOURGOGNE

From a print by Abraham Bosse (1632 1676).

have him buried even by night in consecrated ground, his widow had to throw herself at the feet of Louis XIV (1).

**History of his Plays** (2). — After composing numerous farces, written for the provincial public, and of which we possess two examples, *La Jalousie du Barbouillé* and

(1) Cf. BOILEAU, ep. VII

(2) For this summary of Molière's plays, we have followed the account in the edition of *Grands écrivains* (Hachette) with notices by E. Despois and P. Mesnard, M. E. RIGAL's *Molière*, and *Théâtre choisi de Molière* (Hatier).

*Le Médecin volant*, Molière presented at Lyons, in 1653 or 1655, his first great comedy, *L'Etourdi*.

1653 or 1655. **L'Etourdi ou les Contretemps.** — This play, five acts in verse, was written after an Italian comedy by Nicolo Barbieri, *L'Inavvertito* (the ill-advised), which dated from 1629. First given at Lyons, *L'Etourdi* was repeated at Paris in 1658 with great success, Molière acting the part of Mascarille with remarkable skill.—It consists more in a series of connected scenes than a constructed plot; but to a certain degree the situations depend upon the characters. *Lélie* loves *Célie*, who has been sold to an old man, *Trufaldin*, by some gypsies. In order to set *Célie* free, *Lélie* needs a large sum of money, and it is to get this money that *Mascarille*, his valet, the rogue of rogues (*fourbum imperator*), exerts all his genius. But every infallible ruse invented by *Mascarille* is thwarted by the awkwardness and thoughtlessness of *Lélie*. Finally everything is arranged by the discovery of *Célie*'s real identity, and *Lélie* marries *Célie*. The style of *L'Etourdi* is charming, and though its vivacity is sometimes offhand, it is full of spirit and always dramatic.

1656. **Le Dépit amoureux.** — Nowadays this piece is given in two acts. Originally it had five acts, and was composed after an Italian comedy by Nicolo Secchi. The part which has been omitted since the end of the eighteenth century, consists of a very improbable imbroglio. Only the charming quarrel and reconciliation scenes between *Eraste* and *Lucile*, *Marinette* and *Gros-René*, have been preserved. Molière was to return frequently to this same theme; so that many of his plays could have for sub-title, *Le Dépit amoureux*, as those of Marivaux are always more or less founded on the *Surprises de l'amour*.

1659. **Les Précieuses ridicules** (1). — Every one act comedy written in prose was then called a farce. Thus we have an account of this piece written in 1660 by Made-moiselle des Jardins under the title *Récit de la farce des Précieuses*.—The bourgeois Gorgibus has a daughter, *Magdelon*, and a niece, *Cathos*, who have become *précieuses*. Two young noblemen, *La Grange* and *Du Croisy*, have asked their hands in marriage, but have been refused because the young women did not regard them as sufficiently distinguished. To revenge themselves, *La Grange* and *Du Croisy* send their valets, *Mascarille* and *Jodelet*, to the house of the *précieuses ridicules*, under pretense of being men of fashion and wits. Suddenly their masters reappear, and compel their valets to take off their disguises and show themselves in their linen coats and white waistcoats. The humiliation of the two *précieuses* may be imagined. It was perhaps at Montpellier, where *Chapelle* and *Bachaumont* (see their *Voyage*) noted the presence of a coterie of "*précieuses de campagne*" that Molière observed the types he portrayed in his first original comedy. So recently arrived at Paris, he did not have entrée as yet to the salons, nor could he have availed himself so soon of models in the Metropolis. Nevertheless, *Mme de Rambouillet* and her friends heartily applauded his play. We learn, however, from *Somaize* that an "*alcôviste de qualité*" had the piece suspended for fifteen days. This little masterpiece has never left the theatrical repertory. It was Molière's real début. He could say, after 1659, "I have nothing more to do except observe the world;" and a voice from the parterre called to him: "Courage, Molière! that is genuine comedy."

1660. **Sganarelle**, a farce in one act, in verse, founded on a blunder. In this appeared for the first time the traditional type of *Sganarelle*, a poltroon, beaten and satisfied, who is found again in *L'Ecole des maris*, *Le Mariage forcé*, *Don Juan*; *L'Amour médecin* and *Le Médecin malgré lui*.

(1) Cf. *Les Précieuses ridicules*, Larroumet edition (Paris, Garnier, 1884), *Introduction*. As to Molière's intentions, cf. *RIGAL*, vol. I, p. 109.



1661. **Don Garcie de Navarre ou le Prince jaloux.** — Jealousy, made ridiculous in the preceding farce, is presented here under its tragic aspect. *Don Garcie* is an unhappy effort of Molière to write heroic comedy; and it met with failure. It is only interesting now because Molière used several passages from it in *Le Misanthrope*, with the necessary changes to suit the genre (1).

1661. **L'École des maris** was, on the contrary, a great success. This piece, in three acts and in verse, is freely copied from Terence's *Adelphi*.

But Terence compared the education given to two young men, *Eschine* and *Clésiphon*, by a too severe father, *Déméa*, and a too indulgent uncle, *Micion*. Molière followed the tradition of Italian comedy: *Sganarelle* and *Ariste* each educate a ward; the former rears *Isabelle* in the hardest discipline, and sees her carried off by young *Valère*; *Ariste* is very indulgent with *Léonor*, wins her confidence and her affection, and marries her. The comic elements, even buffoonery, are highly developed. The title "*école*," used later by so many dramatic



FRONTISPIECE OF THE WORKS OF MOLIÈRE  
(1666 edition)

Designed and engraved by F. Chauveau.

(1) All the school editions of *Le Misanthrope* give these passages. But it would be well for students to read *Don Garcie* to see how true genius is its own teacher and corrective.

authors, means a play which instructs, by which one learns what conduct is best in such and such a situation (1).

1661. **Les Fâcheux**, three acts in verse, was composed by Molière for the superintendent Fouquet. The piece was written and rehearsed a fortnight and was given at the château de Vaux on August 17, 1661, during the fêtes. Fouquet gave for the king and the queen-mother. Louis XIV was charmed; he congratulated Molière, and pointed out to him a new type to introduce into his comedy, the great master of the hounds, M. de Soyecourt. On August 25, *Les Fâcheux* was played at Fontainebleau before the court with the sketch of the huntsman included.—It is a comedy “à tiroirs”; a certain number of scenes are given on a very large stage, with characters who do not appear again. This is the plot: *Eraste*, who loves *Orphise*, has persuaded her to give him a rendez-vous; he is constantly prevented from leaving by *fâcheux* (importuns, obtrusive bores): a duellist, a gamester, two *précieuse* chatterers, a huntsman, a pedant. Finally, *Eraste* escapes to join *Orphise*, and their marriage is arranged.—Molière dedicated this play to the king.

1662. **L'Ecole des femmes**. — This was Molière's first “great work”, whose novelty and importance were so keenly felt that there was a quarrel about it as there was about *Le Cid* and *Andromaque*. This play resulted in Molière's being placed on the pension list for a sum of one thousand livres (2).—In appearance, at least, the play seems to be more important as to plot than characters. *Arnolphe* has a young ward *Agnès*, whom he wishes to marry, and whom he keeps ignorant and enslaved so that she may not escape him. Meanwhile, a young man, *Horace*, pays court to the innocent *Agnès*, and invents all sorts of stratagems to attract her attention and win her love. And it is to the unhappy *Arnolphe* himself, whom he does not know to be the guardian of *Agnès*, that the young man confides his success. The new precautions taken by *Arnolphe* turn against himself, and all ends in the marriage of *Agnès* and *Horace*. The motto of the piece could well be these words of Figaro: “If you want to make the most stupid person clever, imprison him.” But, with this plot, borrowed from the Italian story-writer, Straparole, and from which Scarron had already drawn a tale, Molière knew how to portray characters and include a philosophy.—The attacks against *L'Ecole des femmes* were, on one hand, literary, Molière being accused of plagiarism, of disregarding Aristotle's rules, etc., and on the other hand, moral, to the effect that he used vulgar equivocations, disrespectful allusions to religion, etc. To reply to these criticisms, Molière first dedicated his play to Henriette d'Angleterre, duchess d'Orléans, and then composed a little comedy of circumstance, in order to present the case of *L'Ecole des femmes* to the public, the only judge in such matters.

1663. **La Critique de l'Ecole des femmes**. — The action of this short act passes in the salon of an intelligent woman, *Uranie*. Visitors arrive, some of whom attack while others defend Molière. The marquis has found the piece detestable. Why? That is what he will not stoop to explain. The pedant, *Lysidas*, considers it badly done, and separates its construction into *protase*, *épitase* and *périptète*. The prude, *Clymène*, blushes for its immorality. The poet is defended by *Uranie*, her cousin *Elise*, and especially by the Chevalier *Dorante*, who is Molière himself (3).—De Visé replied to Molière's scene by his *Zélinde* ou *La Véritable critique de l'Ecole des femmes*, and Boursault by his *Le Portrait du peintre*.

1663. **L'Impromptu de Versailles** was another piece with an object, and was given at Versailles on October 4 of that same year, and at Paris in November. \* In this Molière

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 531.

(2) Boileau, who had not as yet published any of his satires, addressed to Molière some *Stances sur l'Ecole des femmes*, which witnessed, from that moment, the sureness of his taste.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 524.

defended himself against Visé, Boursault and the actors of the Hôtel de Bourgogne. In this short piece he takes us behind the scenes of his theatre; we see him there as director and actor, surrounded by all his actors, under their true names and character, who discuss and rehearse a new play, and draw from him his advice or remonstrance (1). *L'Impromptu* is preceded by a dedication to the king, in verse, which is a portrayal, as bold as it is piquant, of the fashionable marquis.

1664. **Le Mariage forcé** was written for the court, and represented with ballets for which Lulli composed the music. Among the dancers were the Duke de Saint-Aignan, the Duke d'Enghien, the marquis de Villeroi, and Louis XIV.—Sganarelle, an aged and absurd bourgeois, is to marry Dorimène, a young coquette, daughter of Lord Alcantor. But he has doubts of the merits of this marriage, and consults in succession the Aristotelian philosopher, Paucrace, and the Pyrrhonian philosopher, Marphurius, but without obtaining any response. All the same, he intends breaking his word to Lord Alcantor. But Alcidas, Dorimène's brother and a famous duellist, wishes to force Sganarelle to fight him; and Sganarelle consents to the *mariage forcé*. Nowadays, the *Mariage forcé* is always played without the ballet; and its comic quality is better appreciated, notably in the scenes in which Sganarelle consults the two philosophers. Here Molière shows he had inherited some of the best qualities of Rabelais.



A SCENE OF "TARTUFFE"  
From a print by Jean Lepautre (1618-1682).

1664. That same year, Molière again wrote for the feasts given at the court a comedy ballet, in five acts, **La Princesse d'Elide**. The princess is asked in marriage by Aristomène, prince of Messène, and by Théocle, prince of Pyle. But she loves prince Euryale of Ithaca, and he returns her love. The two lovers, equally proud, do not wish to declare themselves. The result is a series of false confidences which often exhibit finesse and remind one of Marivaux. Finally, the princess, hearing that the prince she loves is preparing to marry her cousin Aglante, sacrifices her pride. A comic role, that of the bouffon Moron (which was acted by Molière), lightens those subtle discussions about love; while interludes, in which music plays an ingenious part, agreeably break these rather slow acts.—Molière wrote only the first act and a part of the first scene of the second in verse, writing the remainder in prose because he was pressed for time.

1664. **Tartuffe** (2). — In a few words, this is the subject of the play: Orgon is a bour-

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 528.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 535.

geois who has made a second marriage with Elmire, and has from his first marriage a son, Damis, and a daughter, Mariane. His mother, Mme Pernelle, lives with him. Orgon has always been an intelligent man, and during the Fronde troubles has behaved like an honest and loyal subject. But he has made the acquaintance of a certain Tartuffe, who has presented himself under the guise of the perfect religious man. Orgon is so taken with him that he gives him hospitality, confides his secrets to him, and promises him the hand of his daughter. When the play begins, we see the family, until then altogether united, divided into two parties for and against Tartuffe. In vain Orgon's brother, Cléante, advises him to beware of this hypocrite; in vain Damis surprises Tartuffe declaring his love to Elmire; nothing can unseal Orgon's eyes; he sends away his son, and wishes to force Mariane into this odious marriage and give all his property to Tartuffe. However, thanks to a ruse of Elmire, Orgon is at last convinced of the rascality of the false religious character of the man, and is ready to show him the door. But Tartuffe, holding the deed of gift from Orgon, means to despoil the family of its property and have Orgon arrested, when fortunately the intervention of the king brings about the punishment of the guilty man.—The history of this play is curious. It was first played, in three acts, at court on May 18, 1664. It is not known whether the piece was complete or not in this first form. However, upon the request of Anne d'Autriche and the Archbishop of Paris, the king would not allow its being given in public, and Molière read it in the *salons*; it was even played in the house of Monsieur and of the Princess Palatine. Molière was authorised to give it publicly on August 5, 1667, but he made several changes in it (the nature of which we know more or less from the *Lettre sur la comédie de l'Imposteur*, written by a spectator), and he counted upon great success. But the following day *Tartuffe* was forbidden by M. de Lamoignon, first president of Parliament. The king was then in Flanders. Molière sent a petition to him by two of his actors, La Grange and La Thorillière, which produced no immediate result, and it was not until February 5, 1669, that *Tartuffe* was definitely authorised to be played. It is one of those plays which raise the most delicate question. We can only refer the student to the innumerable notices and dissertations which *Tartuffe* has inspired (1).

1665. **Don Juan.** — After the first interdiction of *Tartuffe*, Molière was obliged to write hastily a new play which would be capable of drawing the public. The Italian actors were then playing, at the Hôtel de Bourgogne and the Marais, imitations of or adaptations from the *Don Juan of Tirso* by Molina; and the subject made a sensation. Molière therefore also wrote a *Don Juan*. He rather singularly translated the title of the Italian comedy, *Il Convitato di pietra* (*Le Convité de pierre*) as *Le Festin de Pierre*. Don Juan is the "grand seigneur méchant homme", who mocks God and men. He has abandoned his wife Elvire, to marry a young girl, whom he wishes to ravish from her fiancé. A tempest casts Don Juan and his valet, Sganarelle, on a coast; they are picked up by peasants, and Don Juan immediately begins making love to two country girls, Charlotte and Mathurine. Meanwhile, he is pursued by Don Carlos, Elvire's brother, and by an unexpected chance, Don Juan delivers this nobleman from a band of brigands; whereupon Don Carlos decides to let him live. Don Juan comes later to the tomb of the commander whom he formerly killed; he makes a speech to his statue and invites it to dinner. The statue makes a gesture of acceptance. In the following act we see the commander seated at table with Don Juan, and inviting him in turn to sup with him. Don Juan goes to the rendez-vous; but the earth opens, flames leap forth, and Don Juan

(1) See especially the notices in the classic editions (Hatier, Hachette, Belin, Delagrave); E. RIGAL, 1, 221; BRUNETIÈRE, *Conférences de l'Odéon*, II, and *Études critiques*, I and IV; E. FAGUET, *Propos de théâtre*; J. LEMAITRE, *Impressions de théâtre* (passim); DOUMIC, *Études sur la littérature française*, 1<sup>re</sup> série, Perrin; RAUL ALLIER, *La Cabale des Dévots*, Hachette, 1902.



is drawn down into hell.—*Don Juan* is the first of Molière's great plays in five acts written in prose. The public received it with no less favour, applauding especially those passages which recalled *Tartuffe*, particularly the tirade against hypocrisy in the fifth act. But Molière's enemies were scandalised by the boldness of some of the scenes, and the author had to make some corrections. In 1677, Thomas Corneille put Molière's *Don Juan* into verse, softening the questionable passages, and under this form the piece was played until 1840.

1665. **L'Amour médecin.** — This comedy-ballet, with music by Lulli, was one of the first plays in which Molière attacked and ridiculed doctors. It is a recasting of his *Médecin volant*, a farce he had composed in the provinces. A rich, miserly bourgeois, Sganarelle, has a daughter, Lucinde, who is ill. He consults his neighbours, who give him all sorts of interested advice ("Vous êtes orfèvre, monsieur Josse"). Lucinde simply asks her father to bring about her marriage. But Sganarelle pays no attention; he is too stingy to dower his daughter, and prefers to consult four doctors, who order contradictory remedies. Then comes Clitandre, the young man who loves Lucinde; he is disguised as a doctor, and persuades the father that his daughter is mad, and that it is necessary to pretend to marry her to him. The piece ends with the elopement of Lucinde.—The consultation of the physicians in the second act is altogether remarkable as a witty and true parody.

1666. **Le Misanthrope.** — Alceste hates all men, for their lack of candour. He would banish from society all the hypocritical conventions. His friend Philinte, on the contrary, merely accepts men as they are. Now Alceste, by a singular contradiction, loves a coquettish and gossiping young widow, Célimène. The action of the play is very simple: Alceste comes to Célimène's house to bring her to the point of saying whether or not she will marry him, but is always prevented from doing so.—In the first act, he is waiting for Célimène, when an intellectual nobleman, Oronte, arrives, and reads them his sonnet. Alceste finds the sonnet detestable and tells him so; Oronte is angry; a duel is about to ensue, and Alceste goes out without seeing Célimène.—In the second act, he returns with her; visitors are announced; Alceste desires to wait until he can see her alone and come to an understanding; but the marshals send for him to come and make arrangements for the duel.—In the third act, another obstacle intervenes; Alceste is at Célimène's house, when the prude Arsinoé arrives, and promises to give him a letter which Célimène has written to Oronte; Alceste, jealous, follows Arsinoé.—In the fourth act, after a violent scene, Alceste is about to obtain a response at last from Célimène, when his valet Dubois comes to seek him to see about his case at law. Finally, in the fifth act, Célimène is confronted by all those to whom she has written notes, and who have all shown them to each other. Alceste, more generous, offers to marry Célimène if she will consent to leave society; as she hesitates, he refuses her, and declares that he is going to seek "sur la terre un endroit écarté où d'être homme d'honneur on ait la liberté."—*Le Misanthrope* is not understood now in the same way as in the seventeenth century. Alceste was then considered as a very honest man, no doubt, but an absurd one. Hence the criticisms of Fénelon (*Lettre à l'Académie*) and of J.-J. Rousseau (*Lettre à d'Alembert*). We have made a romantic hero of him. *Le Misanthrope*, with its simple action, in which all the incidents are evolved from the principal character, with its style always appropriate to the speakers, its lofty and complex morality, is regarded as Molière's masterpiece. Its success was at first a bit doubtful; but it forced its way and took first rank (1).

In the same year *Le Médecin malgré lui* was produced. It is said that Molière had to

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 521.

compose this farce in order to sustain *Le Misanthrope* which did not draw the public. But the shorter piece did not accompany the play until after the latter's twenty-fourth performance. It must have been a great treat for the spectators to witness Molière's impersonation of the misanthropic *Alceste* and the droll *Sganarelle* in the same representation.—We have already said, in speaking of the fabliaux, that Molière drew material for his *Médecin malgré lui* from the *Vilain Mire* (*Le Paysan médecin*). Sganarelle is a woodcutter, who drinks all he earns and beats his wife Martine. The latter plans her revenge. Two characters come to her seeking a doctor for the daughter of GÉRONTE, Lucinde. Martine tells them that her husband is a great doctor, but will only admit it when he has been well beaten. Sganarelle, when he has been thoroughly whipped, consents to call himself a doctor. They take him to GÉRONTE's house, whom he confuses by his chatter, and he pretends to diagnose the illness of Lucinde. The young girl has become speechless, but it is only a trick she is playing upon her father, because he has refused to let her marry LÉANDRE. Sganarelle comes to an understanding with LÉANDRE, who disguises himself as an apothecary, and thus being able to reach Lucinde, he carries her off. GÉRONTE, in a fury, wants to have Sganarelle hanged, but the two fugitives return, and as LÉANDRE is to be the heir of his uncle, GÉRONTE sees no further objection to the marriage.

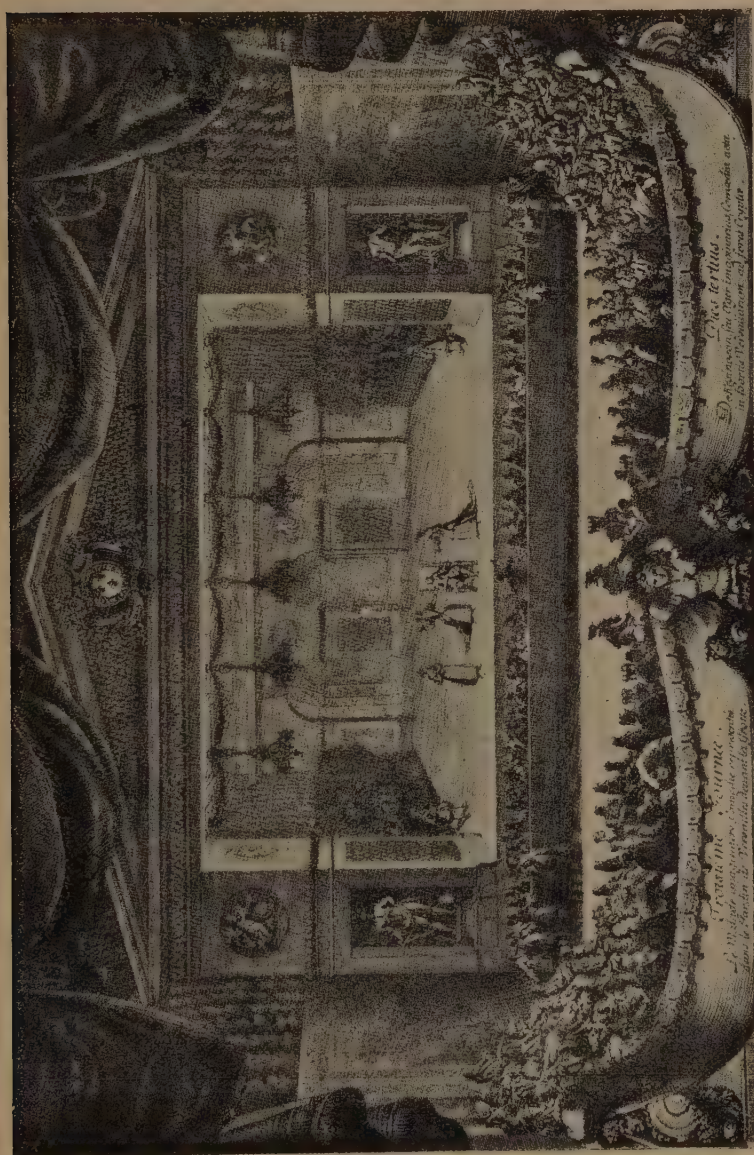
1666-1667. Here we must group three pieces which Molière wrote for court fêtes between December 2, 1666, and February 20, 1667. In the *Ballet des Muses*, arranged by Benserade, a ballet composed of thirteen *entrées*, and in which Louis XIV, Henriette d'Angleterre, Mlle de la Vallière and Mme de Montespan danced, the third *entrée* was confided to Molière, and he wrote *Mélicerte*, an heroic comedy-pastoral.—*Mélicerte* was soon replaced by *La Pastorale comique*; after which a fourteenth *entrée* was added, in which Molière placed his *Le Sicilien ou L'Amour peintre*.

1668. **Amphitryon.**— This piece is an imitation, in free verse, and almost an adaptation, of Plautus' Latin comedy. Of this Rotrou had already made a French version in his *Les Sosies* (1650). During the absence of Amphitryon, a Theban general, Jupiter has assumed his features and installed himself in his house. In the same way, Mercury pretends to be Sosie, valet of Amphitryon. When the master and slave return, they find themselves confronted by their doubles. From this situation result various complications, which Jupiter unravels by revealing his identity.—Molière invented the character of *Cléanthis*, Sosie's wife, to establish a complete parallel, and gave more dignity to the character of *Alcmène* (1).

In the same year, Molière returned to farce in his **George Dandin**, but only such a farce as the author of *Le Misanthrope* could write. For this, he enlarged his sketch, *La Jalousie du Barbouillé*, into three acts. The bourgeois Dandin has married Angélique de Sottenville, daughter of a ruined nobleman. Angélique is a coquette, who allows Clitandre to pay court to her. Dandin wishes to put an end to this, but is the dupe of all his own precautions, and it is he who is obliged to excuse himself to his wife and his father-in-law. He sees in his misfortune the just punishment of his own vanity. "It is your own fault, George Dandin!" *George Dandin* was given during the fêtes at Versailles for the celebration of the conquest of the Franche-Comté.

In 1668, Molière wrote a new play in five acts, in prose, and one of his masterpieces, **L'Avare**, borrowed from various sources, among others Plautus' *Aulularia*, and Larivey's *Les Esprits*. Plautus had depicted, in *Aulularia*, a poor man, Euclion, who having found in his fireplace a pot full of gold, became suspicious and uneasy, like La Fontaine's shoemaker, and who was not cured of his misery until he got rid of his pot

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 236.



THE PLAYING OF A COMEDY BY MOLIÈRE AT VERSAILLES

From the print by Jean Lepeautre (1618-1682).

The *Malade Imaginaire* was played before the *Grotte du Pavé*, in 1674.



as a dot for his daughter. In Harpagon Molière paints a true miser, that is to say, a very rich man who dares not spend a cent of his riches, and continues to grow richer by the practice of usury. Harpagon has a son to whom he refuses to give any money, and who consequently borrows it at a high rate of interest; he also has a daughter, whom he wishes to marry, dowerless, to an old nobleman, but who has signed a promise of marriage to her father's steward, Valère. He himself wishes to marry the young Mariane, but his affection for her does not inspire him with any generosity. La Flèche, valet of Cléante, son of the miser, steals from the father a cash-box containing 10,000 écus, and only consents to return it if Harpagon will renounce his marriage to Mariane, whom Cléante loves. Finally, a paternal recognition ends the play: Mariane and Valère are the children of Lord Anselme who was to marry Elise. So there are two marriages, Mariane and Cléante, and Elise and Valère. As to the miser, he will go "to see again his beloved cash-box."

1669. For the court, then sojourning at Chambord, Molière composed **Monsieur de Pourceaugnac**, a comedy-ballet in three acts, in which the memories Molière had preserved of his provincial life are more vivid than in any other of his plays. M. de Pourceaugnac is a perfectly absurd limousin nobleman, who comes to Paris to marry Julie, daughter of Oronte. But Julie loves Eraste, whose valet, Sbrigani, undertakes to get rid of M. de Pourceaugnac. The cleverest trick he plays him is the following: He summons two doctors whom he tells that Pourceaugnac is mad. The doctors, in a consultation which is a masterpiece (like the one in *L'Amour médecin*), declare that in fact the Limousin is a dangerous lunatic, and have him placed under treatment. Then, they persuade Oronte that Pourceaugnac was already married, and he is threatened with hanging for bigamy.—Finally, Pourceaugnac, furious, quits the place, and Julie is free to marry Eraste.

1670. It was for the fêtes of Saint-Germain that Molière gave the king his **Les Amants magnifiques** (*magnifique* signifying *generous*, as Laurent le Magnifique), with music by Lulli. The court then returning to Chambord, Molière was summoned and produced **Le Bourgeois gentilhomme**, a comedy-ballet, with music by Lulli. M. Jourdain, the son of a rich cloth merchant, is ambitious to be a man of quality. He hires a music-master, a dancing-master, a fencing-master, and a professor of philosophy. He allows himself to be robbed of money by Dorante, who "speaks about him in the king's chamber." He will not marry his daughter Lucile to anyone but a nobleman (1).—Meanwhile, Covielle, valet of Cléante, who loves Lucile, invents a burlesque strategy to deceive M. Jourdain. He presents Cléante to him as the son of the Grand Turk, who has come to marry his daughter. M. Jourdain, highly flattered, gets himself appointed *mamamouchi*, and gives Lucile's hand to Cléante. The Turkish "divertissement" which terminates the piece, was then of current interest, everything Turkish being fashionable at the time, and Molière obtained accurate details for this from Laurent d'Arvieux, who had just returned from the East (2).

1671. **Psyché**, another "divertissement," is a tragedy-ballet which was given at the Tuileries. Molière founded this piece upon a fable related by Apuleius in his *Métamorphoses*, and already used in a ballet by Benserade in 1656, and in a novel by La Fontaine in 1671. This is Molière's version: Psyché is such a beautiful young girl that Venus is jealous of her and asks the god of Love to punish her: the scene between him and Venus forms the prologue. Psyché's two sisters, Aglaure and Cidippe, are also

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 240.

(2) Concerning the Turkish features of the *Bourgeois gentilhomme*, cf. the edition published by M. A. GASTÉ (Belin), and E. RIGAL, vol. II, p. 195.



jealous of her. Two princes arrive and pay court to Psyché, but a messenger comes from the young girl's father to bring her to him. He has been commanded by the gods to expose his young daughter in a desert where she will be devoured by a monster; he expresses his grief and leaves her; but the monster is the god of Love who, touched by Psyché's beauty, transports her to a magnificent palace and becomes her husband. He makes only one condition, that Psyché should never ask his name. Psyché, urged by her sisters, insists upon knowing Cupid's name: Cupid disappears at once, and the palace becomes again a desert. Venus, moved by Cupid's grief, intervenes, and obtains from Jupiter Psyché's pardon.—Molière wrote only the first act of this piece, the first scene of Act II and the first scene of Act III; the remainder was written, upon Molière's plan, by Corneille. Quinault wrote the verses which were to be sung.

**1671. Les Fourberies de Scapin.** — This comedy, in three acts of prose, was written after the *Phormion* by Terence. Molière resumed in this his Italian valets, and included also a farce from his early repertory *Gorgibus dans le sac*, which he had written in imitation of a celebrated piece of buffoonery. During the absence of his father, Argante, Octave has married a poor young girl of obscure birth, named Hyacinthe; his friend Léandre, son of Géronte, wishes to marry Zerbinette. The two fathers return: Argante, who intended to marry his son to a daughter of Géronte, wishes to annul the marriage of Octave and Hyacinthe, while Géronte is furious at the plan of his son to marry Zerbinette, to which he refuses to give his consent. Zerbinette, furthermore, having been stolen in her youth by the gypsies, can only be delivered on the payment of a large sum of money. The valet, Scapin, promises the two young men to relieve them from their difficulties. By various rascalities, he gets the necessary money from the two old men, and avenges himself upon Géronte by a good beating (the scene of the sack). Fortunately Géronte recognises his own daughter in Hyacinthe, and Argante his in Zerbinette. Everybody forgives Scapin (1).

**1672. La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas** — Molière was entrusted with the care of organising fêtes at Saint-Germain in honour of the marriage of Monsieur, the king's brother. He arranged a sort of *Ballet des ballets*, in which he interpolated interludes from *Psyché*, *George Dandin*, *La Pastorale comique* and *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*. The whole was rather loosely connected by a pastoral, now lost. Finally, there were also some scenes in dialogue which formed *La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas*. In this again we find recollections of provincial absurdities. An absurd countess, of Angoulême, imagines, like Bélise in *Les Femmes savantes*, that everybody is in love with her. She is in reality pursued, because of her fortune, by M. Harpin, a tax collector, and by M. Thibaudier, councillor of the *Parlement*, and it is the latter whom she decides to marry.

**1672. Les Femmes savantes.** — Molière at length found time to finish, and have performed in his own theatre, a great comedy in five acts of verse, *Les Femmes savantes*, which is an enlargement of *Les Précieuses ridicules*.—The good bourgeois Chrysale has a wife named Philaminte and two daughters named Armande and Henriette. Philaminte and her sister-in-law, Bélise, are given to pedantic learning, and her daughter Armande has followed her example. The chief ornament of her *salon* is Trissotin, an absurd and hypocritical poet. Young Clitandre had asked the hand of Armande, but as she had compelled him to wait for three years, he transfers his disdained love to Henriette. Philaminte wishes Henriette to marry Trissotin, and a disagreement results between the father and mother. The mother is triumphant at first, thanks to Chrysale's weakness, and Trissotin seems to be master of the situation: he domineers over this *salon*, where he

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 244.

forces admiration for his verses, and introduces there the pedant Vadius. Henriette is in danger of marrying Trissotin, when Ariste, Chrysale's brother, announces that the family is ruined. Immediately Trissotin retires, because it is the dot which he really wants. The news was false, and only designed to unmask the mercenary intellectual. Philaminte then consents to the marriage of Henriette with Clitandre.—This comedy raises all the questions relative to the education of women. The chief point sustained by Molière is that pedantry robs women of their natural qualities, and turns them aside from their true duties.

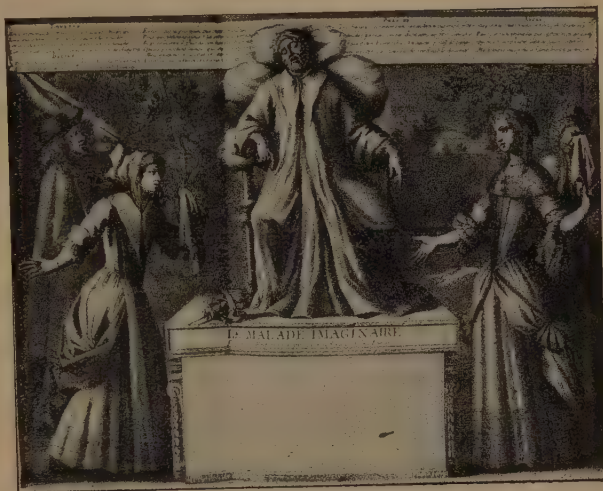
**1673. Le Malade imaginaire.** — This comedy-ballet, composed on the occasion of Louis XIV's victorious return from Holland, was not given at court but on the stage of the Palais-Royal, where it achieved great success. It was Molière's last satire upon doctors.—Argan is an *imaginary* invalid, devoting all his attention to his own health. He wishes to marry his daughter to the son of a physician, M. Diafoirus. He is furthermore urged to sacrifice his children by his second wife, Béline, who makes him write his will in her favour. Undeceived by his brother Béralde, he ends by consenting to the marriage of Angélique and Cléante, whom she loves; but he himself becomes a doctor, and there is a ceremony which is a parody of the reception of the doctors by the Faculty, in the seventeenth century. At the present time, this comedy is an opportunity for presenting to the public all the players of a company.—At the fourth performance, Molière was attacked by illness, and though he managed to finish playing his part, he was carried home to die.

**Molière, the Rules and the Public.**—It is in the *Critique de l'École des femmes* that Molière gives us, in the part of *Dorante*, his opinion upon the rules for play-writing. "There are only," he says, "a few observations made by common sense, concerning things which may destroy what pleasure we take in this sort of poems... The same common sense which made these observations formerly can also make them to-day, without the help of Horace and Aristotle." For him, as for Racine, the great rule was to give pleasure. But to whom? To two kinds of spectators both of whom Molière claimed: the parterre and the court. A play which makes the court and the parterre laugh together, had "accomplished its object." Molière defended the parterre against jesting marquises, and the court against *Lysidas* and *Trissotin*. Those whose judgment he repudiated and challenged were the pedants, prudes, *précieux*, fashionable people whom we would call to-day by the name of snobs; in short, all those who, instead of "yielding to things which really touch their hearts," seek "reasons for preventing them from enjoying themselves" (4).—Molière has himself defined the sort of comedy he wrote, even his apparently most eccentric farces: "When you portray men, they must be portrayed as nature made them. These portraits must resemble the originals, and if they are not recognised, as people of your time, you have failed. It is a strange undertaking, this trying to make nice people laugh."

(1) Cf. H. HÉMON, *Cours de littérature*, Molière, p. 39

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, pp. 524, 526, 528.

**Action in Molière's Comedies.**—Molière, so far as concerns his plots, was a pupil of the Italians. He knew how to construct a piece so that it developed with remarkable smoothness, making the incidents give rise one to another, and creating motives for the exits and entrances of his actors of the most unforeseen kind and the most likely to pique curiosity. We cannot agree with certain criticisms upon his methods in this respect; for nothing is more amusing than his plots. But we should note that Molière, in his character plays, attaches no importance to the plot in itself, subordinating it almost entirely to the psychological study. His object is to place his chief characters in a series of situations which will successively bring out all the points in their nature. Thus he shows us the misanthropy of *Alceste* in a struggle with the faithful friendship and gentle philosophy of *Philinte*, with the conceit of *Oronte*, the coquetry of *Célimène*, the stupidity of his valet, etc. He shows us *Philaminte*, the woman of learning, as housekeeper, wife, mother, and as an admirer of *Trissotin* and *Vadius*. *Harpagon* is successively and alternately, represented as the head of his family, a usurper, and an amorous old man. It is as if a compound body were subjected by chemistry to a series of reactions, in order to divide it into its simple elements.—This operation ended, and Molière feeling sure that he has decomposed thoroughly his character, suddenly brings on the denouement. Generally, he accepts with genuine indifference *dénouements à l'Italienne*, that is, solutions followed by marriage, in *L'École des femmes*, *L'Avare*, *Les Fourberies de Scapin*. The conclusion of *Les Femmes Savantes* is that of a vaudeville; *Tartuffe's* punishment is improbable; *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* and *Le Malade imaginaire* end in buffoonery. But we must know how to distinguish the merely theatrical denouement from the real ending of the play, which was always clearly indicated by Molière, and is seized at once by



LE MALADE IMAGINAIRE

From a print by Jean Lepautre (1613-1682).

reasonable and thoughtful spectators. The real denouement of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* lay in M. Jourdain going mad; that of *Les Femmes savantes* was that Chrysale was incapable of resisting, and that feminine pedantry disorganises the family because Armande remained the victim; that of *Le Malade imaginaire* is that Argante was morally incurable; that of *L'Avare*, not in the gratitude of Thomas d'Alburci and his children, but in Harpagon's remark, "Let us go and look at my dear cash-box again!" One play only, the masterpiece, does without any artificial denouement, that is, *Le Misanthrope*: and it is also the finished type of Molière's conception of action; it is his "play for connoisseurs." When, instead of dealing with the superficial and ephemeral absurdities of a man, we portray in the very beginning his vices or his eccentricities, we are compelled to leave him at the denouement just as he was in the first scene; the situations have changed, but his character remains the same.

**The Characters. Molière as an Observer of Mankind and of his own Time.**—What kind of characters has Molière introduced into his so broadly constructed plays? He himself has told us that he painted from nature; and he had been surnamed "The Observer." In fact, Molière's chief merit is that he gives the impression of truth, even though he sometimes develops to the point of caricature the characters he portrays. In this lies one of the mysteries of his genius, at once so natural and so theatrical. The least important of his characters are alive: a valet who brings in a letter, like Dubois in *Le Misanthrope*, or the poor man in *Don Juan*, or the apothecary in *Le Malade imaginaire*, or M. Loyal in *Tartuffe*, are just as vivid in their way as the chief characters. This gift of intense life is possessed by Molière in the same degree as Shakespeare.—When Molière completely studies an eccentricity or a vice, his chief preoccupation is to place the individual incarnating it in the social milieu most likely to explain and bring out the vice, and to suggest moral reflections. That is why most of Molière's greatest comedies have for their setting the home of a bourgeois family. What do we care, in fact, if an old bachelor hoards his money and dies of hunger on a mattress filled with money; or if he believes himself a great lord and is ruined by his vanity; or if he drugs himself all day and oscillates between his doctor and his apothecary? Or, at least, what consequences would such vices and eccentricities have upon society? In the same way, if an old maid like Bélise opens her *salon* to all the Trissotins of her time, and, for love of Greek, kisses all the Vadius in Paris, what would that mean to us? But Harpagon, M. Jourdain, Argante are fathers of families, and in indulging their manias, they cause the misfortunes of all who surround them. And Philaminte is a wife and mother; her absurdity blinds her and makes her egotistical, and this causes Chrysale to suffer. We can conceive the effect of an eccentricity so situated; it arouses resistance and reaction; it brings out other



eccentricities or opposing vices, such as prodigality, stupidity, impertinence, weakness, vulgarity. That is life.

Molière is not satisfied with merely placing his characters; he composes them of a sufficient number of elements so that they may have in themselves the complexity of nature, and like nature, they are sometimes enigmatical. Take for instance the old curmudgeon, Harpagon, who denies the necessities of life to his children, and goes out by night to steal the oats from his horses : he wishes to marry again. At

first, this seems absurd and contradictory ; but no, it is only a whim which will make his avarice more evident still, for this unsuitable love has no more effect upon his one real passion, than his fatherly duty had.—Alceste is a virtuous and stubborn man, enraged against all the vices of the time—whom does he love? Célimène, the coquette. And how can we explain that, being so candid and so estimable, he was at the same time so absurd?—And Tartuffe, what is he in reality?

To what extent was he a devout man, criminally sincere, who interpreted even the precepts of religion in favour of his own passions, or a hypocrite who pretended to respectable belief? He is wise who will never reply to this question, and he is vain who thinks to solve the mystery. Tartuffe is a singular mixture of fanaticism and imposture, as Alceste is of virtue and pride, and Philaminte of admirable stoicism and silly feminine vanity, etc. That is life.



A COMEDY SCENE

From a print by Jean Lepautre (1618-1682).

One will notice, on the right and left of the scene, the spectators are seated on long benches.

**Molière's Tragedy.** — And, as life is like that, so is it in reality much more sad than laughable. Musset has excellently defined : “ *Cette mâle gaîté si triste*

*et si profonde, Que lorsqu'on vient d'en rire, on devrait en pleurer.*" All of Molière's great comedies — *L'Ecole des femmes*, *Le Misanthrope*, *L'Àvare*, *Les Femmes savantes*, and some of the farces, like *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* and *Le Malade imaginaire*— could be made into genuine dramas. A guardian flouted by a "petite peste" whom he is honestly in love with; a sincere man, like Alceste, victimised by a coquette; a father, Harpagon, detested by his children; a M. Jourdain or an Argante sacrificing their families to their manias—all these are situations far from comical in themselves. And Molière does not avoid serious scenes as is sometimes untruly said. What pathos lies in the explanations between Alceste and Célimène! What a shudder passes over the audience when old Harpagon, cursing his son, the son replies: "*Je n'ai que faire de vos dons!*" And we feel a kind of terror when Argante, pretending to be dead, Bérise intones her cynical triumphant couplet. But though Molière feels, and makes us feel, the tragic depths of his subjects, he does not prolong the feeling, but quickly dissipates seriousness, to which he seems to have been obliged to yield by the force of truth. As Alceste and Célimène begin to wound each other, the marshals' envoy, or the valet Dubois enter unexpectedly; the sudden arrival of La Flèche, bringing the cash-box, after the scene of the cursing, plunges us again into the movement of the plot; the "resurrection" of Argante and the flight of Bérise bring back again the farcical character of the play, and the piece as a whole is irresistibly laughable and gay.—Molière is an observer whose first conception of life would be sad, as might be surmised from his great melancholy eyes and wrinkled brows. His first movement would be towards drama, and at first to "take things tragically," but reflection would soon show him the absurdity of things. Who was it who said: "The world is a tragedy for him who feels, and a comedy for him who thinks?"

**Molière's Morals.**—Molière has been accused of being immoral. Among the most unfavourable opinions must be recalled those of Bossuet (*Maximes sur la comédie*), Fénelon (*Lettre à l'Académie*) and J.-J. Rousseau (*Lettre à d'Alembert*). Bossuet wrote: "He has shown to our century what may be expected from the morals of the theatre, which attacks only the absurdities of the world, leaving it all its corruption." Fénelon and Jean-Jacques both accused him, and in nearly the same words, "of having made vice seem agreeable, and virtue ridiculously austere."

1° In this discussion we should first put the question: "What sort of moral teaching should be demanded of the theatre?" If we consider comedies and farces, it is sufficient that the subject should be decent, and cause laughter without giving offense. As soon as a comedy portrays life and society, should the author be compelled to take the part of virtue against vice? Now consider this: if an author creates artificial characters, all of the same kind, and by his own will leads them on to reward or punishment, intelligent spectators will

feel at once that this morality is not that of life. Comedy can only be moral through the truth of its characters. Morality in comedy may be reduced to this: choose situations which in themselves are not immoral, but place the characters, with human weaknesses or virtues, in the midst of the true temptations of life; to show that those who yield to vice, passion, pride, or vanity in all its forms, sooner or later suffer unhappy consequences; and that those who resist their evil tendencies, even though poor, have the superior satisfaction of the approval of their conscience, and the esteem of the world. Evidently, this is not high Christian morality; but though inferior to it, it is not opposed to it.

2<sup>o</sup> Was this Molière's method? Nearly always, yes. Selfish and vicious people, in Molière's plays, are punished by the scorn of good people, and often by personal failure, such as Sganarelle, Arnolphe, and Tartuffe. Others, like

Harpagon, M. Jourdain, Argante and Armande, though they seem to succeed, are finally punished by being abandoned by their own people, or by the foreseen consequences of their folly.—But Molière has been accused of ridiculing the authority of fathers, guardians and husbands. To this we may reply that Molière did not take the impertinent son, Cléante's, part against Harpagon, nor Agnès' against Arnolphe, nor Angélique's against George Dandin. But he warns all those who possess authority that a bad use of it may have bad consequences. Where then would lie the lesson for Arnolphe, if Agnès' manœuvre had not succeeded?—Another objection: Molière gives great parts to rascals or vicious

Pièce	Vendredi 10 <sup>me</sup>	2 <sup>e</sup> Représentation du malade Imaginaire.	1992 <sup>fr</sup>	71 <sup>fr</sup>
Honnêtes				
et sages				
de s <sup>rs</sup> de				
Molière	Dimanche 12	Malade Imag.	1459 <sup>fr</sup>	55 <sup>fr</sup>
	part			
	Mardi 14	mal. Imag	1879 <sup>fr</sup>	80 <sup>fr</sup>
	part			
	Vendredi 17		1219 <sup>fr</sup>	39 <sup>fr</sup>
	part			

Comme vous avez la bonté sur les 10 heures d'après  
Monsieur de Molière mourut dans la maison Rue de Richelieu, ayant fait le rôle du malade Imaginaire fort incom-  
mode son épouse réfléchit sur la posture qu'il lui faisoit  
une grande peur de voir que dans les vains efforts qu'il faisoit  
pour cacher il se feroit une veuve dans la loge et ne  
verrait pas deux heures ou trois heures de plus l'ad-  
resser comme il le feroit son corps d'enterrer et Joseph d'ayde  
de la paroisse St. Eustache. Il y a une tombe bleue d'un  
pié hors de terre.

Dans le desordre d'un tel troupe, le trouva après cette perfor-  
mation le Roy eut dessein de joindre les acteurs qui la  
composoient aux Comédiens de l'hôtel de Bourgogne  
Cependant après avoir été le dimanche 19 et mardi 21 Sans Jours  
En attendant les ordres du Roy on recommença

FRAGMENT OF THE *Registre de Lagrange*.

A copy of the page where the death of Molière is noted.

men, and ridicules good people: thus Tartuffe has distinction, and it is Orgon who amounts to nothing; the little marquis in *George Dandin* is witty and knowing, while Dandin is a fool; Célimène manages to have her own way by lies and courtseys, while Alceste is duped, etc. Molière has, then, made good people seem ridiculous. But, according to the very judicious observation of E. Faguet, Molière was right. It is only absurd good people—that is, those who through weakness or vanity, have been deceived by rascals—who should be given a lesson by which they may profit. The comic poet warns them. He warns the Orgons, the true religious people, that there are Tartuffes, and the Philamintes that there are Trissotins; he warns the *George Dandins* of the danger of misalliances; and, though the lesson must first make them suffer, he warns Alcestes against Célimènes (1)—Finally, it is said truly that Molière upholds and defends nature against all who would deform or enslave it. In this sense, he would be a disciple of Rabelais and Montaigne. Without doubt; but we must understand what is meant by the word “nature”, precisely because of the inexact relation it may suggest between Molière and his predecessors or successors. Nature must here be understood as reasonable and disciplined. Molière has never preached in favour of the instincts nor of complete liberty; he is, as has been said, “law-maker for good-breeding”; he always deals with man in society, among his own kind, and obliged to regulate his conduct and morals according to the duties of his condition. Must we go so far as to speak of Molière’s philosophy? The word is perhaps too ambitious; for the principles of this philosophy, when collected, prove to be identical with the essential laws of comedy, and appear to have been held in common by all those who, writing to make the public laugh, have been indulgent censors or sceptical interpreters of life.

We have defended, or rather done our best to explain Molière’s morals. But does this mean that there is no real objection against them? Evidently, no. Molière wishes to please, and does not always please by excellent means; he flatters certain prejudices and certain instincts; he mixes sometimes questionable jests among noble and great subjects (2). I may believe very sincerely in the purity of his intentions, and yet think it imprudent to handle the question of hypocrisy on the stage. And though I may assure myself that he wished to give salutary lessons to fathers and husbands, I may fear all the same that, in the eyes of fools, he has ridiculed marriage and paternity: and there are a number of fools in a theatrical audience. But there again he must be allowed the advantage of many extenuating circumstances, when we compare him with his predecessors and his contemporaries, even with a few of his successors;—so much so that, for any reasonable Frenchman, Molière’s morals are healthy, provided we do not seek in them anything he has not put there himself,

(1) As to Alceste, see the chapter on J.-J. Rousseau.

(2) Cf. E. RIGAL, vol I, p. 181.



**Molière's Style.**— His style is theatrical; and therefore, at various periods, he has provoked criticism sometimes from purists, like La Bruyère, sometimes from writers not familiar with the theatre, like Fénelon. The former said: "All that Molière needed was avoidance of jargon and barbarisms, and to write purely." (*Caractères*, ch. I) And Fénelon: "... While thinking well, he often speaks badly; using the most forced and least natural phrases. Terence said in four words, with the most elegant simplicity, what this writer cannot say without a multitude of metaphors approaching balderdash. I place his prose high above his verse... But, in general, he seems to me incapable of speaking simply enough, even in prose, to express all the passions (*Lettre à l'Académie*, ch. VII)." Have these reproaches, easy to explain relatively, much value in themselves? It must be admitted that Molière wrote very rapidly, whether in verse or prose; which resulted, especially in his verses, in a few labored passages, a few somewhat incoherent metaphors, and some traces of nonsense. But, on the other hand, it must be remembered that Molière had such an objective dramatic genius that he wrote each role from the dictation of his characters. The marquises and the young dandies naturally speak the over-refined slightly *précieux* language, of fashionable people, and that was a sort of jargon for which Molière was not responsible. The fat bourgeois, like Chrysale, M. Jourdain, Mme Jourdain, M. Josse, M. Dimanche speak good, plain, lively French, that of the Palais and the shops. And the servants talk in any way, sometimes with proverbs from the city market, sometimes with their own provincial accents. Artisans use the metaphors and phraseology of their crafts. Molière was one of the first to feel how much social environment fashions and deforms in time the individual. Compare the styles of the dancing-master, the tutor in philosophy, the fencing-master in the *Bourgeois gentilhomme*; study Tartuffe's and M. Jourdain's, and you will be convinced that, long before Diderot, Molière gave each social condition its own language. In a word, Molière has no style, or, he has as many styles as he has different characters; in which respect he is infinitely superior to Regnard, Marivaux, Beaumarchais and Dumas fils. Never did Molière make an effort to seem witty. The naïve persons and the imbeciles in his plays always remain true to themselves. And the student will recall the reply of *Dorante*, in the *Critique de l'Ecole des femmes*, to the flip-pant marquis, who makes fun of a silly remark of Arnolphe's: "The author did not write that to be in itself a witticism, but a remark which characterises the speaker."

#### IV. — AFTER MOLIÈRE.

After Molière, it suffices to note two comic writers (since we connect Dancourt and Regnard with the eighteenth century):

**BOURSAULT** (1638-1701) has already been mentioned with respect to the part he took, somewhat thoughtlessly in the quarrels about Racine and Molière. He was also an enemy of Boileau's. Of his numerous comedies, we may mention *Le Mercure galant* (1683), *Esopé à la ville* (1690), *Esopé à la cour* (1701). *Le Mercure galant* is occasionally played even now. It is an amusing *pièce à tiroirs*, several scenes from which—*Les Bavardes*, *La Rissole* and *Merlin*—are quoted in all the Miscellanies (1). Boursault's style is easy, amusing, and has not grown too old-fashioned.

**BARON** (1633-1729), a celebrated actor in Molière's troupe, went over to the Hôtel de Bourgogne after the latter's death. As an author he had some success. His best comedy, in prose, which forms a transitional link between Molière and Dancourt, is *L'Homme à bonnes fortunes* (1686); Moncade, a sort of new Don Juan, was, before the appearance of *Le Chevalier à la mode*, a significant type.

**Foundation of the Comédie-Française** (1680). — After Molière's death, his troupe, the direction of which his widow had undertaken with the actor La Grange, was obliged to give up the theatre of the Palais-Royal, which Lulli took possession of in May, 1673. The troupe established itself in the rue Guénégaud, where it was joined by the Marais troupe to make one company. Finally, on June 23, 1680, an order of the king united the actors of the Hôtel de Bourgogne with the other two troupes, and La Comédie-Française was founded. Through many vicissitudes and frequent moving, it has endured to the present time, and preserved all the great traditions of the stage.—Molière's widow married in 1677 the actor Guérin d'Estriché.

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(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 252.



#### HUNTING

Decorative frieze by Jean Lepautre (1618-1682).

### CHAPTER XI.

## LA FONTAINE AND THE FABLE.

#### SUMMARY

1° From the time of the Middle Ages the writing of fables had never ceased. Several collections had appeared, before La Fontaine, in the seventeenth century.

2° **LA FONTAINE** (1621-1695) led the easy-going life of the dreamer and epicure. He first published his *Contes*; then, in 1668, six books of *Fables*, dedicated to the Dauphin; in 1678-79, five other books, and in 1694, his twelfth.—An independent genius, both lyric and dramatic, he found in the fable the form which best suited him. He restored the genre and appropriated it; he made a *little comedy* of it; he knew animals and depicted them, not as a naturalist, but according to popular tradition.—By the amplitude and variety of his pictures, the naïveté and richness of his style, La Fontaine is “the French Homer.”—His morality is not didactic; it makes a statement, and warns us.—As a writer, La Fontaine is classic, but with more freedom and *gauloiserie* than his contemporaries.

3° **AFTER LA FONTAINE**, more fables were written by **FURETIÈRE**, **BOURSAULT**, etc.

## I. — THE FABLE, FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO LA FONTAINE.



DECORATED LETTER  
of the end of XVII century

WE have seen how popular the fable was in the Middle Ages. The sixteenth century converted it into a more learned genre. Correct Latin translations of *Æsop*, particularly that made by Laurentius Valla in Italy, and the publication of the genuine text of *Phèdre* by Pierre Pithou, led the humanists to compose literary fables. Among the fabulists of the French Renaissance must be mentioned : **GILLES CORROZET**, who published in 1542 the *Fables du très ancien Esope phrygien*, dedicated to the Dauphin — (did La Fontaine remember this when he dedicated his own to the son of Louis XIV ?)—**GUILLAUME HAUDENT**, who published in 1547 *Trois cent soixante-six apologues d'Esope*,—and **GUILLAUME GUÉROULT**, author of the *Premier livre des emblèmes* (1550), in which are interpolated twenty-seven fables. Of Haudent and of Guérout we have, under different titles, some versions of the subject treated by La Fontaine in *Les animaux malades de la peste*; and the beauty of La Fontaine's fable does not lead us to forget a few excellent qualities in the work of his predecessors (1).—Besides the fabulists properly so called, we should note the charming fable inserted by Marot in his *Épître à Lyon Jamet* (1526); and when later on La Fontaine wrote his *Le Lion et le Rat*, he was not equal to his model.—Finally, in prose, Rabelais published, in the prologue of the *Quart livre*, a very picturesque version of the fable *Le Bûcheron et Mercure*;—and there are also *Le Savetier Blondeau* (*Le Savetier et le Financier*) and *La Laitière* by Bonaventure des Périers, and *L'Ours et les deux Compagnons* by Philippe de Commynes.

In the seventeenth century :—Mathurin Régnier inserted, in his satire III, *Le Mulet, le Loup et la Lionne* (subject treated by La Fontaine in his *Le Renard, le Loup et le Cheval*) (2); there are also the collections of **PIERRE BOISSAT** (1633), and of **AUDIN** (1648); and above all the Latin translation of *Isop* by **MESLIER** (1629), in which last work are some very good descriptions. "This work rings sometimes like La Fontaine's; the methods are the same; and perhaps we should note these resemblances more carefully as Meslier's *Esope* was certainly a classic in the college of Reims where our great fabulist acquired his education (3)".

Here we should also note the appearance, in 1644, of the *Livre des Lumières*,

(1) As to these fabulists, see F. GODEFROY, *Morceaux choisis du seizième siècle*, and L. LEVRAULT *La Fable (Évolution du genre)*, Paris, Delaplane.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 190.

(3) LEVRAULT, *La Fable*, p. 69.





LA FONTAINE

From the portrait painted by Ch. Lebrun (1619-1690)  
and engraved by G. Edelinck (1649-1707).

ou la conduite des rois, composé par le sage Pilpay. This was Gaulmier's more or less free translation of the celebrated collection of oriental tales, *Calila et Dimna*, which had already been used by mediæval preachers and writers of fables.

## II. — LA FONTAINE (1621-1695).

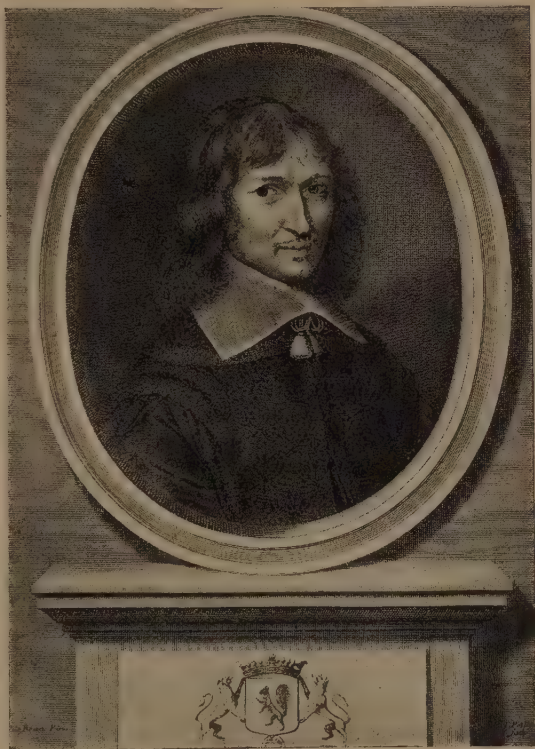
**Biography. — Infancy and Youth** — Jean de la Fontaine was born at Château-Thierry on July 8, 1621, in a house which still exists and has been converted into a sort of museum. His father, Charles de La Fontaine, was Master of Waters and Forests and captain of the hunt; he was the son of a draper. Jean took many walks in the forest with his father, and soon by himself, and read whatever he liked in the ample library of his grandfather. But it is an error to describe him as a vagabond scholar. A humanist with such profound and assured learning as his must have studied Latin assiduously from early childhood. La Fontaine's fame was from an early date coloured by legend; and the lazy and ignorant, believing themselves possessed of genius, have ascribed to one of the most learned and thoughtful of all French writers the mere luck of talent.

**Sojourn at Château-Thierry.** — Under the influence of reading, La Fontaine thought he had an ecclesiastical vocation, and at nineteen years of age entered the Oratoire, where he remained more than a year. After this he became a lawyer, and in 1644 was again at Château-Thierry where he stayed for ten years, making only a few journeys to Paris and Reims. At twenty-seven he married, in Paris, Mlle Marie Héricart, daughter of the Lieutenant of Police of La Ferté-Milon. His wife, it appeared, had none of the qualities of order and judgment which would have balanced the faults of La Fontaine; she preferred intellectual occupations and romances to housekeeping, and her dreaming and careless husband liked well-ordered houses. So he lived most of the time with other people. At the same time, La Fontaine had inherited his father's situation, of which he remained titular until 1672 and which he filled very badly. During this time, in fact, he was accumulating by reading and revery the material he was soon to utilise in his *Contes* and *Fables*. His friendship with the learned and charming Maucroix, which attracted him often to Reims, gave him more and more a taste for the ancients and the Italians. He composed many little poems for provincial circles, in which facile humour made up for abstraction; but the translation of Terence's *Eunuchus* which he published in 1654, marked his real début in the field of letters, and showed him to be a studious humanist. As he began to acquire a reputation as a poet, La Fontaine neglected his business more and more, and his affairs became much embarrassed. It often happens to those who have a horror of chicanery to be condemned to continual

litigation, a logical consequence of their initial carelessness, and so it was with this man, absorbed by his overmastering genius. Doubtless, we must not imagine him as an over-grown child. If he persisted in his dreamy indifference to affairs, it was because he was obliged to choose between practical life and the poet's life. Now, it was to escape for good and all from the troubles which beset him at home that he allowed his uncle Jannart to introduce him to Superintendent Fouquet in 1657.

### Sojourn at the Home of Fouquet. —

From 1657 to 1661 La Fontaine lived in Fouquet's home at Saint-Mandé or at Vaux. He dedicated to him in 1657 his poem *Adonis*; and the Superintendent gave him a pension, asking him in exchange only for a few verses every three months. From this time date a number of short pieces, odes, ballads, madrigals, which have some good points. His stay with Fouquet introduced him to the society of the time: he met Mme de Sévigné, Mlle de Scudéry, Desmarests, Conrart, Chapelain, and most of the poets whom Boileau was soon to ridicule. He was also present, in 1661, at those famous fêtes during which Molière's troupe acted *L'Ecole des maris* and *Les Fâcheux*, regarding which, in a letter to Maucroix he expresses the enthusiasm of a connoisseur (1).



FOUQUET

From the portrait painted by Lebrun (1619-1690)  
and engraved by F. de Poilly.

**At Paris. — The Contes. —** This quietude was soon troubled by the fall of

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, 225.



Fouquet, to whom, however, he remained more faithful than might have been expected from of so easy-going a character (1). Jannart being exiled to Limousin, La Fontaine accompanied him. We know this from the charming letters he then wrote to his wife (2). On his return he was patronized by the Duchess de Bouillon (Marie Mancini), who lived sometimes at Château-Thierry, sometimes at Paris. The hôtel de Bouillon was a centre of literary independence and free-thinking; and it was there that the cabal against Racine's *Phèdre* was organised in 1677. It is unpleasant to see La Fontaine put up and pensioned by the patron of Pradon. At the same time he visited the dowager Duchess d'Orléans, widow of Gaston, at the Luxembourg, whose *salon* was another centre of opposition and of literature, though already old-fashioned. Nothing proves better the originality of La Fontaine's genius than that, formed as he was outside the classic group, he assimilated elements which to other writers seemed superannuated but which gave him a taste for old French subjects, his best source of inspiration; yet he at the same time admired Molière, formed a friendship with Boileau and Racine, and in their company acquired, little by little, the best part of classicism.

Meanwhile, in 1664, La Fontaine had published his first collection of *Contes*, under the title: *Nouvelles en vers tirées de l'Arioste et de Boëce*;—in 1665, he published a second series.—In 1668, the first six books of the *Fables* appeared, dedicated to the Dauphin. La Fontaine hoped by this dedication to conciliate Louis XIV, who did not like him and was never to do so. In 1669, he published *Psyché*, a poem with prose interpolations (3). In 1671, appeared a third collection of *Contes*.

**At Mme de la Sablière's. — The Academy.** — The year 1672 was an important one in La Fontaine's life: Mme de la Sablière, wife of a rich financier, offered him hospitality. When Mme de la Sablière retired to the hospital for incurables in 1633, she left La Fontaine an apartment in her hôtel in the rue Saint-Honoré, which he never left until the death of his benefactress in 1693, when he went to live in Mme d'Hervart's house. It was at Mme de la Sablière's that he composed and published in 1678 and 1679 his second collection of *Fables* (Books VII to XI), dedicated to Mme de Montespan, whose sister, Mme de Thianges, he already knew. But the publication of new *Contes* in 1675 had again displeased the king; and when he was elected in 1683 to the French Academy, the king refused to ratify it until the following year, when the election of Boileau seemed to Louis XIV to be a sufficient compensation. We know that Abbé de la Chambre, commissioned to reply to La Fontaine's discourse, lectured him like a child. Luckily La Fontaine read afterwards his *Discours à Mme de la Sablière*, which effaced this unfortunate impression (4).

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 582 (*Élégie aux Nymphes de Vaux*).

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 230.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 591.

(4) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 585.



**Last years.** — Yet he published more *Contes* in 1688, and formed a connection with the Vendômes, nephews of the Duchess de Bouillon, who held at the Temple and in their château d'Anet a free-thinking court; also with the Conti, nephews of the Grand Condé, whose reputation was no better. This was the period in which he wrote a few mediocre plays in collaboration with Champmeslé, husband of the famous actress who created several roles in Racine's tragedies. These plays were *Ragotin* (1684), and *Le Florentin* (1685), which must not be confused with a satire against Lulli, published under the same title in 1686 (1), and *La Coupe enchantée* (1688). Finally, in 1694, La Fontaine dedicated to the young Duke de Bourgogne, Fénelon's pupil, his twelfth book of *Fables*.—A serious illness in 1692 having already inspired him with sentiments of sincere piety, he had repudiated his *Contes*. On April 13, 1695, he died the death of a Christian at the home of M. d'Hervart in the rue Plâtrière (now the rue J.-J. Rousseau).

**His Character.** — La Fontaine's good-nature has been exaggerated, and also, as we have said, his unconsciousness. The peculiarity of his genius being that it could not develop except in the absence of all constraint and all material preoccupation, made him an egotist and a parasite. His absent mindedness, became for him a means of escape from bores. He seems, also, to have entirely lacked moral energy and will power; even his good-nature was weakness; to the end of his life he allowed himself to be influenced by disreputable social connections, and we are compelled to acknowledge that in this respect he was greatly inferior to Boileau and Racine. If he deserves forgiveness for his faults, it is because of the touching candour with which he often admitted them; of the confusion they caused him in his better moments; and finally, we must say, because he possessed, as thinker and writer, the qualities of his defects, and that his genius represented alone in the seventeenth century independent poetry.

**Various Poems, Tales and Letters.** — From the foregoing biographical notes we can see that La Fontaine was not only a fabulist, but that, from 1654 to 1694, he rambled through all the genres. We have even omitted the mention of a tragedy, *Achille*, of which he only wrote two acts (published after his death), *Clymène*, a comedy (1674), *La Captivité de Saint-Male* (1673) — a religious poem dedicated to Cardinal de Bouillon — and *Le Quinquina* (1682).

At Fouquet's, La Fontaine had written a number of short light poems: the poem *Adonis* (in which occurs the famous line, "Ni la grâce plus belle encor que la beauté"); — *Le Songe de Vaux*, an allegorical poem, unfinished. But of these various works, those which rank with his best fables are: *L'Élégie aux Nymphes de Vaux* (1661), on the subject of Fouquet's disgrace (2); the *Lettre à Maucroix* (1661), with verses intermingled, in which he so well appreciates the budding genius of Molière (3); *Le Florentin*

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 232.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 582.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 225.

(1686), a bitter satire against Lulli (1); *Le discours à Mme de la Sablière* (1684), necessary for an analysis of La Fontaine's character (2), *L'Épître à Huet, évêque de Soissons* (1687), to accompany a copy of Quintilian, a letter in which La Fontaine successfully defines how the Ancients can be originally imitated (3); *Psyché*, in two books, in which there is nearly as much prose as verse, of which the mythological portion, in the taste of the time, may be set aside in favour of the famous Prologue to Book I, in which La Fontaine, under the name of Polyphile, describes himself in the gardens at Versailles with three friends, Ariste (Boileau), Acante (Racine), and Gélaste (Molière or Chapelle) (4); finally, *Philémon et Baucis*, imitated from Ovid, and nowadays to be found in most editions of the *Fables*.

The *Contes*, imitated from Boccaccio, the famous Italian raconteur of the fourteenth century, and from Ariosto, an Italian poet of the sixteenth century, frequently borrowed from old French and Gaulois subjects, and would not have sufficed to immortalize La Fontaine. The form of the *Contes*, whatever may be the merits of their style and versification, has far less literary value than that of the *Fables*. How far was La Fontaine conscious of the immorality of the greater number of the latter? He is wise who could say. But it is well to observe that the licentiousness with which he wrote was not approved by his contemporaries — with the exception of the free-thinkers — and that the lieutenant of police, by order of the king, suppressed the collection of 1675.

We possess a certain number of La Fontaine's letters. We have already seen that he wrote to his wife during his journeys in Limousin; we have mentioned a letter to Maucroix in 1661, and there are others addressed to him, especially one which La Fontaine wrote three days before his death (1695) (5); some letters to Saint-Evremond, the Duchess de Bouillon, etc. The following is M. Lanson's judgment upon this part of La Fontaine's work: "It may be said that we find in these letters, in their early and perfectly natural condition, all the qualities which, refined and selected by choice and reflection, place the author of the *Fables* in the first rank of French poets. In them we also see more distinctly La Fontaine's connection with Voiture, and how he gradually freed himself from an unfortunate influence (6)."

**La Fontaine finds in the Fable the literary form which suits him best.** — But in all his other works, leaving aside the Fable, La Fontaine could not rise to his full height. He needed a genre, not too narrowly defined, and which, at the same time, embraced all the others. He found the Fable. — The fable is a tale; and La Fontaine was an exquisite narrator, formed in the school of the latest sixteenth century trouveres, and the Italians; — the fable is a comedy, and La Fontaine knew how to observe and depict absurdities, to penetrate characters and give to each one the language appropriate to his condition; — the fable is framed in a description of nature, and La Fontaine knew and loved nature; — the fable allows personal reflections, and consequently individual and lyric poetry, excluded from the other genres, and La Fontaine, a capricious and melancholy dreamer, could give us his impressions and his air-castles — finally,

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 232.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 585.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 587.

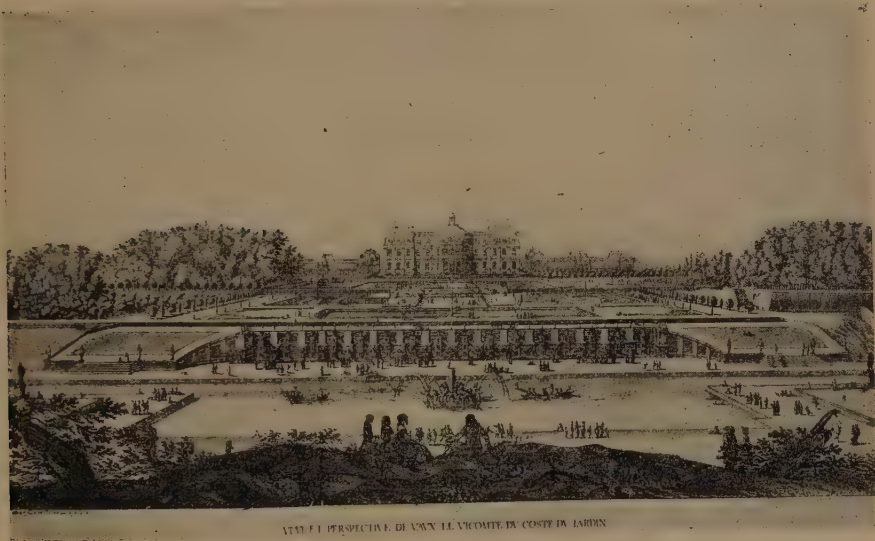
(4) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 591.

(5) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 593.

(6) G. LANSON, *Choix de lettres du dix-septième siècle*, p. 325.

the fable requires a moral, and La Fontaine, a good-natured epicurean, an ironical witness of manners, could tell us what he thought of men in speaking of animals.

**How La Fontaine transformed the Fable.** — But we have been speaking of the fable as La Fontaine, not as *Æsop*, wrote it. Let us see then how he transformed it to give it such breadth and richness, and to adapt it to himself.



VIEW OF THE CASTLE OF VAUX, BUILT BY LOUIS LEVAU (1612-1670)

From the print by Israël Silvestre (1621-1691).

1° He did not trouble himself to invent subjects, which he took from his predecessors, ancient or modern. Look at any edition in which the source of each fable is indicated, and you will be edified. "His originality", said Saint-Beuve, "is in his manner, not his matter."

2° In *Æsop*, *Phèdre*, *Pilpay*, etc., he found the elements of a little drama which he perfected: *a*) In organising the plot, the exposition of which, the movements, the knot, the denouement, are admirably connected (cf. *Le Chat*, *La Belette*, *et le Petit Lapin*; *Les Animaux malades de la peste*; *Le Loup et le Chien maigre*; *Le Singe et le Chat*, etc.) All of La Fontaine's fables are interesting, like tales.—*b*) He often sets the fable in a little scene very quiet but very suggestive, and which we can easily complete (*Le*

*Chêne et le Roseau; Le Héron; La Colombe et la Fourmi; Le Jardinier et son Seigneur*, etc.): but the greater part of the fables have no scene indicated;— c) He draws with amazing sureness the nature of his characters. Each one is alive, with his proper motion, physiognomy, gestures and language. La Fontaine, like Molière, has no style; he lets the fox, the wolf, the lion, the financier, the shoemaker, the milkwoman speak according to their own characters and the conditions they represent. These are the essential elements of La Fontaine's drama. We may add that his definition of his fables, "an all-embracing comedy with a hundred different acts", must be understood in a broader sense, like *La Comédie humaine* of Balzac.

3° La Fontaine knew and loved animals, and he protested against Descartes, theory, that they are nothing but machines, in his *Discours à Mme de la Sablière*. But here we must avoid an error. We must not see in La Fontaine a naturalist, nor cavil at him because he made a few scientific mistakes. He described and analysed animals as children and common people have done in every age. His genius lies in his having observed them and painted them from nature, and endowed them with sentiments always in accord with their physical state. Within these bounds he is admirable. It is unnecessary to recall here the happy epithets he uses in characterising the cat, the dog, the rat, etc., which everybody remembers. But think of the roles he assigns in this all-embracing comedy to the lion, the wolf, the fox and the ass... Compare them with the episodes in the *Roman du Renart*, and you will see how much the advantage lies with La Fontaine.

4° La Fontaine has the feeling for nature. He has seen these animals running about the woods and meadows, swimming in the river or the brook. However short his descriptions are, they strike us by their truth and depth. It may be the grass which the warm zephyrs have rejuvenated; or the transparent wave where the fish disport themselves; or the *chemin montant sablonneux, malaisé*; or the *humides bords du royaume des vents*, etc. These little landscapes all produce a sensation of reality. Often also La Fontaine lets himself fall into a reverie: *O fortuné séjour, ô champs aimés des dieux!* In these phrases he is a lyricist in the broadest sense of the word.

5° In his fables he paints every social condition, sometimes in the persons of animals (the lion is the king, the fox the courtier, etc.), sometimes without any change, as in the shoemaker, the peasants, the miller, the curé, the astrologer, etc., for there are a great many tales in these fables. We can find in La Fontaine, as in Molière and La Bruyère, a whole gallery of seventeenth century portraits, and none is more varied or more complete.

**La Fontaine is the French Homer.** — The fable, as La Fontaine understood it, has so much amplitude, that Joubert said: "La Fontaine is our Homer." This judgment at first appears paradoxical. If we wanted to compare La Fon-



taine to some poet of antiquity, it would, perhaps, be Theocritus, Anacreon, Virgil as author of the *Georgics*, or to Horace... But Joubert well knew what he meant to say. What is the Homeric epic, in reality? For the Greek people, it was the book of books, the collection of their traditions, legends, beliefs, in a style ranging from the sublime to the familiar. The French of the seventeenth century had no such book, the more so as they had forgotten their mediæval literature. Was it not La Fontaine who was the first to preserve in these fables with their pleasing form the landscapes, characters, all the manifestations of life? Is there any book more thoroughly French, in this sense? And is it not in this respect that foreign readers cannot altogether appreciate it? But let us limit the comparison, for in many ways the *Fables* cannot be likened to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; and the French would deserve pity if they found in La Fontaine, as the Greeks were able to find in Homer, the expression of their ideal.



MADAME DE LA SABLIERE

From an old portrait, printed in the XIX century  
by Tony Johannot.

### La Fontaine's Morality.

— The ancients composed fables solely for the concluding moral. The little story was a demonstration, and Esop wrote it as if it had been a geometrical formula. La Fontaine evidently did not undertake the composition of his fables to give lessons to his contemporaries; his indulgent philosophy could never have made him dogmatic. But as he wrote fables, and tradition required that they should be furnished with a moral, he yielded the point. In his Preface of 1668, he insists on the usefulness of the apologue, which is composed of two parts: the body, which is the narrative, and the soul, which is the moral,—which was to tell us, very adroitly, that we should not

expect the author to draw the lesson from the fable, as the lesson in a way is evident throughout the narrative, and is disengaged from it as in life itself.—La Fontaine teaches, like life (the morality being drawn from experience) that presumption, vanity, pride, hardness of heart, prodigality, avarice, etc., lead man to misunderstand the natural or social conditions of life. “We must help each other, it is the law of nature.” “We often have need of someone smaller than ourselves.” “In wishing to gain everything, avarice loses all.” “In every case, the end must be considered.” “Let us associate only with our equals”, etc. He warns us against all forms of power, the court, courts of justice, financiers, etc. He gives us a general lesson in moderation and intelligent kindness.—Is that nothing? and should we, like J.-J. Rousseau and La Fontaine, be on our guard against this morality? Could we not say, on the contrary, that this experience drawn from ordinary life in these charming fables will save us the hard lessons of reality? That is why, in spite of Rousseau, La Fontaine’s fables will always be an excellent lesson for childhood, on condition, be it understood, that an intelligent master explains them; and this is possible, despite the opinion of the author of *L’Émile*.

And now, we must admit that this morality is incomplete, that even the name of “moral” does not wholly belong to it, because it teaches neither devotion, sacrifice, nor any of the virtues which must belong to mankind, if we would be really great. But it is sufficient if we understand this point, and only take La Fontaine for what he is, never supposing that the *Fables* can replace the Gospels.

**La Fontaine as a Writer.** — Like Molière, and even more than Molière, La Fontaine is the fullest and most varied classic writer. He knows how to assume every tone. He is serious and almost sublime, sometimes gravely (*Les Animaux malades de la peste*, *Le Paysan du Danube*, *La Mort et le Mourant*, *Le Bûcheron et la Mort*), sometimes in the mock heroic manner (*Le Soleil et les Grenouilles*, *Le Lion malade*, *La Tortue et les deux Canards*, *Phébus et Borée*). He is direct and ironical, amusing himself as much as he amuses us in the greater part of his fables. He is sometimes emotional and lyrical. He is satirical. In each genre his language is remarkably appropriate, and that is why he uses a vocabulary more extensive than any writer of his time. Voltaire, in his *Liste des écrivains du dix-septième siècle*, has reproached him with this, judging him careless and unequal. “Young people,” he said, “and especially those who superintend their reading, should be careful not to confuse his fine natural manner with the familiar, low, careless, trivial faults into which he too often falls.” A singular reproach, and supported by the most singular examples! La Bruyère, who was a purist, was not so fastidious! In his discourse to the French Academy he said of La Fontaine: “Another, more equal than Marot, and more of a poet than Voiture, in fact, unique in his own genre... who has surpassed his

models, and is himself a model difficult to imitate." It is just this variety and richness which protected La Fontaine from nineteenth-century criticism; his realism as well as his lyricism have pleased; but he is classic in his unity and restraint.—As a versifier, he proved that he knew all the secrets of the craft; but this does not mean only that he employed all kinds of verse, his merit lies in his having always used the appropriate form. *Vers libre* was the inevitable form for a genre in which the writer passed from description to dialogue, from satire to morality, from the comical to lyricism. It is wonderful to see how the rhythm, without ever ceasing to be musical, lends itself to the most unexpected changes in subject and tone, and how much it adds to the power of the whole effect.

*A Limoge ce 19 Sept 1663*

*Ce seroit une belle chose que de voyager, s'il ne se falloit point lever si matin  
 l'al que nous estions monsieur de Chastaigneuf et moy; luy pour avoir fait  
 tout le tour de Richelieu en grosses bottes, ce que se croit vous avoir mandé,  
 n'ayant pas deu obmettre une circonstance si remarquable; moy pour m'estre  
 amusé a vous écrire au lieu de dormir*

*Fac simile of a letter written by La Fontaine to his wife during his journey in Limousin.*

**Why Boileau omitted the Fable from his *Art Poétique*.**—It has been claimed that Boileau's fear of displeasing the king prevented him from referring to the Fable in his *Art Poétique*, especially as it was represented by a writer whom the king did not trust. This reason is not admissible. The truth is that Boileau gave in his work only the rules for the poetic genres, that is, those which must be written in verse, and for the same reason he omitted the *Conte*, the *Épître* the *genre didactique* and the *Fable*, all of which may be written in prose as well as verse. Also, Boileau only mentions the ancients, and such of his contemporaries as were dead at the time he wrote (1).

### III. — THE FABLE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

When a great writer seems to posterity the unique representative of a genre, it is always useful to show that he was not, in his time, the only writer who cultivated it. La Fontaine had numerous rivals and imitators. In 1670, Mlle **DE VILLEDIEU** published *Fables ou Histoires allégoriques*, dedicated to

(1) Upon this subject, cf. Le Bidois, *La Fontaine* (Hatier).

Louis XIV.—In 1671, **FURETIÈRE** published some *Fables morales et nouvelles*, inventing his own subjects, a few of which are ingenious.—In 1677, **DESMAY** published *L'Esope français*.—In 1699, **CHARLES PERRAULT**, author of the *Contes*, published *Cent Fables en latin et en français*. Add to these **BENSERADE**, **BOURSAULT** (who inserted some fables in his comedies, *Esope à la cour* and the *Fables d'Esope*); **EUSTACHE LE NOBLE**, etc. It is not necessary to study all these writers; suffice it to say that among a number of talented fabulists, the only one who has survived is La Fontaine.

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LAMP PENDANT

by Gérard Audran (1640-1703).





DECORATIVE FRIEZE BY JEAN LEPAUTRE (1618-1682).

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE THEORY OF THE CLASSIC IDEAL.

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#### BOILEAU. — THE QUARREL OF THE ANCIENTS AND MODERNS

##### SUMMARY

1° **BOILEAU** (1636-1711) came of a modest professional family, had an independent fortune and wrote as he pleased. He read, in society, his first *Satires*, published in 1666; then *Les Épîtres*, *L'Art poétique* and *Le Lutrin*. He outlived all his friends.

2° The chronology of the *Satires* and *Épîtres* must be carefully noticed in order to understand their timeliness.— The bourgeois satires are often characterised by picturesque realism; the *moral* satires are weakest; the *literary satires* were intended to discredit bad authors who were then in fashion, and compel the public to appreciate great geniuses.

3° *L'Art poétique* was written after most of the masterpieces of the century had appeared, and Boileau registered and made a code of "good usage" from the writings of men of genius.—Boileau knew nothing of historical criticism.

4° His theory may be formulated as follows: **Nothing is beautiful but truth, truth only is lovable;—love reason;—imitate the ancients.**

5° The somewhat exclusive love of great writers for the ancients brought about a reaction. In 1687, **CHARLES PERRAULT** celebrated the age of Louis le Grand as equal to those of Pericles and Augustus. Boileau protested.—The quarrel was renewed, on the subject of Homer, between Mme Dacier and La Motte.—The question was badly put on both sides; but the *moderns* triumphed, and the notion of *progress* inspired the whole of the eighteenth century.



DECORATED LETTER  
taken from the *Métamorphoses d'Oride*.  
Paris, Langelier, 1619.

THE classical ideal was determined just as Molière established himself in Paris, before Racine's début, after the *Provinciales*, and at the precise date when Louis XIV began to reign and his court to be organised. This ideal, defined for forty years by Malherbe, Descartes, the Academy, Vaugelas, the Hôtel de Rambouillet and Balzac, had not, however, overcome all opposition. Public taste still inclined towards Spanish bombast, Italian affectation, false gallantry and burlesque. It was towards 1660 that Boileau, resuming the task which Malherbe had undertaken, brought about the defeat of all the enemies of reason and truth, and succeeded in preparing public opinion for the success of *Andromaque*, *Le Misanthrope*, the *Marines* and the *Fables*.

But there are few authors at once so celebrated and so misunderstood as Boileau. To regard him, as the eighteenth century did, as a "Parnassian legislator," is to make him responsible for the inadequacy and mediocrity of the pseudo-classics. No doubt, he formulated some eternal precepts of absolute truth; but more than anyone else he should be, as a whole, studied with reference to his own time, and for two reasons: first, because his *Satires*, which are the negative part of his work, should above all be regarded as polemics, and second, because his *Art poétique*, which appeared after the chief masterpieces of the seventeenth century (1674), simply establishes what may be called the "usage" of writers of genius of his time.

In the same way, the quarrel of the ancients and moderns, which seems so paradoxical when not closely examined, appeared at the end of the seventeenth century as the effect of a legitimate reaction from a too narrow classic ideal. But these are questions of historical rather than literary criticism.

## I. — BOILEAU (1636-1711).

**Life and Character.**—Like Molière and Voltaire, Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux was born in Paris on November 4, 1636, and not at Crosne, near Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, as was long believed (1). He was the fifteenth child of Gilles Boileau, registrar in the *Parlement*. Two of his brothers, Gilles a lawyer, who was elected to the French Academy twenty-five years before Despréaux, and Abbé Jacques Boileau, canon of the Sainte-Chapelle, also had a reputation for brilliance and causticity, and their witticisms were famous (2).—Nicolas lost his

(1) A questionable legend relates that he was born in the room where *La Satire Ménippée* was composed.

(2) Cf. SAINTE-BEUVE, *Causeries du lundi*, vol. VI.

mother a year after his birth, and was reared, very severely it is said, by an old servant. The absence of feeling in some great writers is often explained by the absence of maternal affection in their youth, by those who forget that Racine was only three years old when he lost his mother. But it is true that the future author of the *Satires* was rather timid and taciturn in his early youth, and his father said of him: "As to this one, he is a good boy who will never speak ill of anyone." He began his education at the age of eight in the college of Harcourt (now the Lycée Saint-Louis); and at the age of eleven was obliged to undergo the serious operation for stone. He afterwards entered the college of Beauvais at Paris. It was intended that he should take holy orders, and he was tonsured at an early age; but repelled by theology, he obtained his father's permission to study law, and became a lawyer. However he did not like chicanery any more than he had liked theology.

The death of his father in 1637 gave him in every respect the independence his talent needed for its development. First of all, he was able to renounce the



THE INAUGURATION OF THE MUSEUM BY LOUIS XIV

*From the print by Sébastien Le Clerc (1637-1714).*

The progress of the sciences during the XVII century is one of the remote causes of the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns.

bar and write poetry, and the possession of a modest but substantial fortune largely explains the absolute freedom of his satires. Boileau was independent at a time when most writers were obliged to live upon the bounty of the great, or of the king. This should not be forgotten when we read the praises he addressed to Louis XIV, to Condé, to Colbert, to Montausier : he asked nothing in return but esteem.—It was probably at this period that he took the name of Despréaux, from a small estate called Les Préaux, which his father had owned at Crosne, and it was nearly always by this name that he was known in the seventeenth century.

Boileau began by publishing a few mediocre verses in a collection of *poésies galantes* which appeared in 1663. But as early as 1660 he had written his first *satire*, and continued until 1669 to attack bad poets and defend those whom posterity, also, has recognised. That was the first period of his literary life.—The second extends from 1669 to 1677, and includes the *Épîtres*, the first four cantos of the *Lutrin*, *L'Art poétique*, and the translation of the *Traité du Sublime*, by Longinus. Boileau then lived usually in his house at Auteuil, where he received his friends Molière, Racine, La Fontaine, Chapelle and Furetière. Protected and liked by the king, he did not receive a pension from him until 1676; and in 1677, he was appointed historiographer at the same time with Racine.—The third period, from 1677 to 1711, was that in which Boileau composed his last works in verse, a few satires and *épîtres*, and cantos V and VI of the *Lutrin*. The Academy never thought of him, being still full of writers whom he had ridiculed; but the king forced his election in 1684. From 1687 onward he was much occupied with the quarrel of the ancients and moderns; and added, in 1693, to the *Traité du sublime*, by Longinus, some *Réflexions critiques*. At the close of his life, having survived all his friends, and full of infirmities, he became morose and melancholy. He corresponded at that time with Brossette, an advocate at the Lyon *Parlement*, a great admirer of his talent and character, and these letters are very interesting, constituting a precious document in his own history as well as that of his works and of contemporary society.

He died on the 13th of March, 1711, at the house of Canon Lenoir in the rue du Cloître-Notre-Dame, and was buried in the Sainte-Chapelle. An imposing cortège accompanied his funeral. "He had a great many friends," cried a passer-by, "this man who spoke ill of everybody!" In 1819, Boileau's remains were removed to the Church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés.

**Chronology of the Satires.** — Boileau's satires in all existing editions are not arranged in chronological order. It is best to classify them by dates in order to measure his progress, and especially to understand better certain allusions.

In 1660, he wrote *Satire I* (*Adieux d'un poète à la ville de Paris*); from this later on he took the long episode called *Embarras de Paris* to make *Satire VI*. In 1663, he wrote *Satire VII* (on *Le Genre satirique*). In 1664, *Satire II* (to Molière, on *La Rime*); and





BOILEAU

From the portrait painted in 1704 by Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659-1743) and engraved by Pierre Drevet

Satire IV (to Abbé Le Vayer, on *Les Folies humaines*). In 1665, he wrote Satire III (*Le Repas ridicule*); Satire V (to Dangeau on *La Noblesse*); and *Le Discours au roi*. — Boileau had not yet published any of these pieces, which he enjoyed reciting to his friends, and in certain *salons* where his juvenile boldness was highly appreciated, when an edition which he qualified as "monstrous" appeared in Holland in 1666, under the title *Discours libres et moraux en vers*. Boileau, that same year, gave a correct edition to the publisher Billaine, which had great success. The following year, 1667, he added two other satires to this edition, the VIIIth (to Claude Morél, Dean of the Faculty of Theology, on *L'Homme*), and the IXth (*A son Esprit*). — In 1694, he published Satire X (*Les Femmes*); in 1698, satire XI (to Valincour, on *L'Honneur*); in 1711, Satire XIII (*L'Équivoque*).

**The Bourgeois and Moral Satires.** — Let us first say a few words about the picturesque and bourgeois satires, and the moral satires. To draw portraits or satirical pictures, inspired by the manners and morals of one's time, had been a tradition from the time of Horace and Juvenal, and had been continued in France by Mathurin Régnier. Boileau did not invent, but imitated when he wrote *Les Embarras de Paris* and *Le Repas ridicule*. His originality lay in certain new details which he introduced into this traditional framework. It is certainly Paris of 1660, and the bourgeois absurdities of the same period, which amuse us in satires III and VI. We can convince ourselves of this by comparing Boileau with his models (1). But it must be observed that Boileau was never a better poet than here, in that sense of the word which implies the gift to see and paint picturesque detail. He is, then, a very intelligent realist. And the same qualities reappear every time he writes description in the moral and literary satires (see particularly satire X, the story of the lieutenant of police, Tardieu) (2). Still more so in the *Lutrin*. We should mention, no doubt, the fine verse of the *Épîtres* and of the *Art poétique*, but in these Boileau is abstract, and his language is not so picturesque.

The moral satires are decidedly less good, except satire V on *La Noblesse*, which is judicious and courageous. Systematically caustic, and with too Parisian wit, Boileau's ideas, in these satires, are not profound enough, nor is his psychology penetrating. His bourgeois jansenism gives him a tone which, being both morose and mocking, offends. Satire IV (*Les Folies humaines*), and Satire VIII (*L'Homme*) consist of ancient commonplaces which, in this instance, are not rejuvenated either by observation of contemporary manners or picturesque expression. Satire X (*Les Femmes*), not very cleverly imitated from Juvenal, contains however a few briskly drawn portraits, and is saved by the episode already cited. If we consider this satire in relation to its own time, in the "quarrel of the ancients and moderns," we understand it better (3). The feeble satires XI and XII (*L'Honneur* and *L'Équivoque*) are almost negligible.

**The Literary Satires.** — In the bourgeois or moral satires are many attacks upon bad poets, as in *Le Repas ridicule*; upon the *précieuses*, as in *Les Femmes*; and the names of Cotin, Chapelain, Goras or Pradon appear unexpectedly in the turn of a verse. We feel that Boileau is above all, and naturally, a literary critic. His best satires, those in which we must recognise both timeliness and power, are, then, satires II (on *La Rime*) (4), VII (*Le Genre satirique*) (5), and IX (*A son Esprit*).

Three exaggerations had appeared, as we have seen, in French poetry: *Préciosité*, *bom-*

(1) These comparisons are easily made, thanks to the notes in the classical editions.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 564.

(3) Satire X raised a lively discussion, in which Arnault, Perrault and La Bruyère took part.

(4) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 257.

(5) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 597.

*bast* and *buffoonery*; and each of these deformations of nature appeared, about the year 1660, in the work of influential poets. We might readily imagine, at this distance of time, that writers like Benserade, Cotin, Chapelain, Scarron, Pradon, etc., must have been little thought of by a society which applauded Corneille and appreciated *Les Provinciales*; and that Boileau publicly attacked writers whom the good sense of the public had already rejected, merely to make his own reputation. But this is a mistake. Boi-



BOOK SHOPS IN THE GALLERY OF THE PALACE, IN THE TIME OF LOUIS XIII

From the print by Abraham Bosse (1602-1676).

leau attacked critics whose judgment was then considered infallible (was it not Chapelain whom young Racine respectfully consulted in 1660 ?); poets who were the delight of the people with their sonnets and their madrigals, or who based their fame on loud-toned epics; novelists who carried their readers with impunity to the twentieth volume; writers of tragedies who encumbered the stage with grandiloquent or sickly-sweet heroes. These gentlemen had on their side the publishers, the great lords, the Academy—the Academy where Boileau was not received, we repeat, until after having published nearly all his works, and ten years after his *Art poétique*, upon the formal demand of Louis XIV. If the books of Scudéry, Chapelain, Saint-Amand, Colletet have become simply “grotesque”, in the exact sense of the word, it is because the courage-



cous campaign undertaken by Boileau resulted in discrediting them to the point that even their names would now be forgotten if Boileau had not enshrined them in his immortal verse. "Who would know, without me, that Colin once preached!" — On the other hand, we know how the great classics, whose indisputable reputation has been established for two centuries—like Molière, Racine, La Fontaine—were attacked by literary cabals and people of fashion. A history has been written about Racine's enemies; what might not be said of Molière's! Public opinion, then, did not recognise them at first. It hesitated between Quinault and Racine, between Boursault and Molière, between Benserade and La Fontaine. It was Boileau who, with remarkable diagnostic sureness, proclaimed from the very first the superiority of enduring genius over fashionable talent. When he addressed to Molière his stanzas on *L'École des femmes*, or his second satire; when he distinguished between Racine and Quinault, after the appearance of *L'Alexandre*; when he said that *Britannicus* was a play for connoisseurs; when he wrote, after *Phèdre*, his epistle on *L'Utilité des ennemis* (1), in which Racine and Molière enter into immortality, the fight was at its hottest. In the criticism of one's contemporaries, the most clear-sighted are sometimes blinded by prejudice or friendship. Now, Boileau only committed literary errors with regard to ancient, mediæval and sixteenth century authors; concerning those of his own time he was never deceived. Even his reservations concerning Molière, in his *Art poétique*, may be explained.

So, Boileau's role as a satirist of his own time was a double one: on one hand, to ruin false reputations which encumbered the *salons* and the stage, and open the way for great geniuses; and on the other, establish the fame of men like Molière and Racine. Without doubt, the latter authors would have triumphed in the end, and Boileau's criticism with regard to them was not positive. It was only after the appearance of masterpieces that he formulated the laws of the classic genres. But he perhaps preserved his friends from discouragement; he defended them nobly from the cabals; he persuaded them that posterity would do them justice; he supplied them with character and spiritual resistance.

Boileau then could legitimately make his own apology in his ninth satire, which he addressed *A son esprit*. In this he replied successfully to objections which he knew how to turn against his adversaries themselves with a spirit worthy of Pascal in the *Provinciales*, or of Paul-Louis Courier (2). The "rights and limitations" of satire are perfectly indicated in this piece, and Boileau boasts truly of having never indulged in offensive personalities; he had always known how "*de l'homme d'honneur distinguer le poète*." Did he believe he could disarm his enemies by this means? And did he not know that the amour-propre of a man of letters is more sensitive than the honour of a good man (3)?

**The Épitres.** — First, this is the chronological order in which Boileau composed his *Épîtres*: — In 1669, *épître I (Au Roi)*; a fragment taken from this formed *Épître II* (to Abbé des Roches, *Contre les procès*); — in 1673, *Épître III* (to Arnauld, *Sur la Mauvaise Honte*); — in 1674, *Épître V* (to Guilleragues, *Sur la connaissance de soi-même*); — in 1675, *Épître VIII (Au Roi)* and *épître IX* (to Seignelay, *Le Vrai*); — in 1677, *Épître VI* (to Lamoignon, *Sur la Campagne*); — *Épître VII* (to Racine, *Sur l'utilité des ennemis*); — in 1695, *Épître X (A ses Vers)*; — *Épître IX (A son jardinier)*; *Épître XII* (to Abbé Renaudot, *Sur l'Amour de Dieu*).

Among these epistles we should mention those which Boileau addressed to the king,

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 602.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 529.

(3) Read the judicious reflections of JULES LEMAITRE in his *Impressions de théâtre*, X, p. 205.



giving him council as to moderation, and at the same time praising him tactfully and recounting his exploits (*Épître IV*). Perhaps *Le Passage du Rhin* is somewhat spoiled for us by the mythology, and by certain methods of style which his own severe criticism of contemporary epics should have led him to avoid. But there are also in these epistles some well-turned verses, sometimes amusing,—as, for instance, those in which he makes use of so many proper names of cities or illustrious warriors.—Then followed his best epistles, which were both moral and literary (V, VII, IX); the last two, especially, to Racine, *Sur l'utilité des ennemis* (1), and to Seignelay, *Sur le Vrai* (2), are Boileau's masterpieces; they are characterised, particularly the VII, by emotion which Boileau seldom indulged in, and which has therefore the more value.—Other epistles are, in a way, more personal. In imitation of Horace, one of his favorite models, Boileau tells us of his country life (at Bâville, at Haute-Isle, at Auteuil, at M. de Lamoignon's (3), or in his own little house, of which Antoine, the gardener, was steward. In epistle X he addresses himself to his own verses, and gives us some information concerning his age and character.

Boileau's *Épîtres* have neither the charm nor the facility of those of Horace; but it would be difficult to deny that they are superior to the latter from the philosophical or even critical point of view. In Horace's work there cannot be found the equivalent of Boileau's fine epistle IX, to M. de Seignelay, which contains—even more fully perhaps than the *Art poétique*—Boileau's theories; nor of epistle VII, to Racine, one of the most eloquent protests ever written by genius, conscious of its own worth, against the momentary success of mediocrity.

**Le Lutrin.** — This heroic-comic poem in six cantos was published in two instalments. The first four cantos appeared in 1673; the last two in 1683. The subject is a quarrel among the members of the chapter of the Sainte-Chapelle. "In this chapter," Boileau wrote, "the treasurer fills the highest office, and officiates like a Bishop. The precentor is next in dignity. There stood formerly in the choir, in the place occupied by the precentor, an enormous desk or lectern, which almost entirely concealed him. The precentor had it removed. The treasurer insisted upon having it replaced; and hence arose the dispute..." M. de Lamoignon having challenged Boileau to write an epic poem on this trifling subject, Boileau accepted the challenge and wrote *Le Lutrin*. He had the honour to create a kind of new burlesque in French. Instead of following Scarron and his imitators by attributing trivialities and buffooneries to great heroes, and transposing epic actions to a lower tone, Boileau did just the contrary: to sing this "sacristy quarrel," he blew the epic trumpet; lending to grotesque characters the gestures and language of heroes, using Homeric methods to describe the nocturnal expedition of a wig-maker, or a battle in which flying books were the missiles. This reversed parody is perhaps more witty than the other sort, inasmuch as it does not suggest profanation, like *Le Virgile travesti* or *La Belle Hélène*.

Without analysing here *Le Lutrin*, which is so diverting to read, let us merely note that the first four cantos are versified in the happiest manner. It is like the *satires bourgeoises* lively and picturesque, and heightened here by excellent literary criticism (4).

**The Art poétique** (1674). — This didactic poem was, of all Boileau's works, the one which most increased his reputation and brought him the most enemies. With respect to its style, *L'Art poétique*, though often remarkable for solidity, and precision, and abounding

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 602.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 606.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 269.

(4) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 265; 2nd cycle, p. 608.



in verses which have become proverbs, does not seem to us comparable, however, to his best satires or best epistles. Its style, as a whole, is somewhat restrained, cold and artificial.—Also, every time Boileau touches upon literary history, whether ancient (Homer, Greek tragedy, the Greek ode), or modern (Marot, Ronsard, mediæval drama) he is inaccurate or incorrect. The short history of Roman satire ought to be excepted. In giving an abstract and absolute definition to each genre, Boileau seems to fail to take into account the essential difference between literary tastes in different times and countries. He is often dogmatic, in the strictest sense of the word. He lacks essentially what we esteem the highest nowadays in criticism, the historical sense. This fault is especially evident in his plea in favour of the pagan marvellous.

Yet, to thoroughly appreciate *L'Art poétique*, it is necessary, as we have already said, to apply precisely the historical criticism which Boileau did not practise. It explains everything, and even his faults become interesting. The general precepts of the first canto, the special rules for the lesser genres in the second canto, those for the great genres—tragedy, epic, comedy—in the third; and finally in the fourth the moral advice—all are in accord with the ideal and the practice of the great classical writers, whose usage, after all, Boileau simply “registers.”—“Parnassian lawmaker,” if you like, but like one who codifies customary laws, not one who imposes new ones.

Let us formulate Boileau's poetic theories, then, by consulting *L'Art poétique* and also the *Épîtres*.

**Boileau's Doctrine.**—1° *Nothing is beautiful but truth.*—Truth is nature, but nature both general and selected; general, because a work of art must interest all men capable of reflecting and feeling; selected, because the exceptions or monstrosities which nature sometimes produces are contrary to her general plan, and must be separated therefrom by our choice. This is why Boileau forbids affectation, burlesque, bombast, and everlastingly returns to what is natural, and alone beautiful, that is to say, alone worthy to attract and engage the artist.—This natural element, in the great genres, is above all psychological. However, Boileau does not exclude picturesque depiction of external nature; but he eliminates those features which may be too special, and therefore be unintelligible to the readers of another age. Alfred de Musset said later on: “Nothing is true but beauty,” and this precept has the same meaning as Boileau's.

2° *Truth only is lovable.*—The object of poetry is not to instruct or prove, but to please; and Boileau affirms that nature alone pleases. All affectation repels the reader. “*Chacun pris en son air est agréable en soi.*” And in the seventeenth century it was necessary to please society, which could not support continued sublimity, nor tolerate a too gross realism, and which liked to recognise itself in the analyses and in the inventions, rather than to feel itself dominated and crushed by the extraordinary.

3° *Love, then, reason.*—But what should be the criterion in our search for truth and nature? Our imagination carries us into the region of the unreal and fanciful; our sensibility leads us to exaggerate our own ways of suffering or enjoying; so, it must be our reason that shall guide us. Boileau's “reason” is nearly synonymous with common sense. It is the common faculty, belonging

to all men in all times and in all countries, which is based upon what is universal and unchangeable in human nature.

4<sup>o</sup> *The imitation of the ancients.*—And how shall we cultivate our "reason," and teach it to distinguish the true from the false, the general from the special, the ephemeral from the lasting? By the study of the ancients. They, in fact, nearer than we are to nature, have described and analysed it with more simplicity. And why is it that their works, conceived in a civilisation so different from ours, have survived so many revolutions of politics, religion, manners, even forms of art? Is it not because their works contained what is universally and truly human? In their school we may learn, therefore, how to distinguish mankind from individuals, and our works may merit in their turn immortality.



APOTHEOSIS OF BOILEAU

From the print by Bernard Picart (1673-1733).

THE APOTHEOSIS OF BOILEAU BY BERNARD PICART

This is, in a word, Boileau's doctrine, and all his particular precepts lead us back to this general theory.

What did he lack in order to be complete? We shall see in our study of the quarrel of the ancients and moderns.

## II. — THE QUARREL OF THE ANCIENTS AND MODERNS

From the time of Ronsard and the Pleiad, the ancients were accepted as undisputed masters of all the poetic genres. This part of the doctrine had been confirmed by Malherbe, Balzac, the first French tragedies, Corneille's masterpieces, etc. Respect for antiquity attained its highest degree with Racine, La Fontaine and Boileau. Molière was more independent. Towards the end of the seventeenth century a reaction occurred at two different periods : this was the *quarrel of the ancients and moderns*.

**The Causes of this Quarrel.**—By imitating the ancients, the moderns had succeeded in creating works which could bear comparison with the former. This resulted in a national literature as fecund in masterpieces as that of the ancients. It was time, then, to abandon a modesty which had become hypocritical, and to proclaim that the age of Corneille, Molière, Racine, etc., was as valuable in quality and productivity as those of Pericles or Augustus. But partisans of this opinion, legitimate enough in itself, went so far as to proclaim, not an equality with the ancients, but a superiority to them, and to admire their contemporaries while scorning the writers of antiquity.

At the same time they did not discriminate, among modern writers, between the excellent and the mediocre. This gave rise to a protest, exaggerated in its turn, on the part of disciples of the ancients, who allied themselves, so to speak, with those masters of antiquity who had served them as models.

Special causes for the dispute should be noted also :

a) The incontestable progress of the sciences, and especially applied sciences, gave birth to the idea of progress, which was to be desired in letters as well as in science.

b) Alongside the idea of progress, which is somewhat rationalistic, the Christian idea had part in the consideration of the partisans of the moderns : it seemed to them impossible that moral superiority, the result of Christianity, should not have brought about literary superiority.

c) There was also a protest in favour of individualism, too much pressed by the classic theory—the rights of the imagination and of fancy as against reason.

**History of the Quarrel.**—Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, in his prefaces to his epic poems, upheld the excellence of the Christian marvellous (1669-1674).—In the third canto of the *Art poétique*, Boileau interdicted the Christian marvellous. Boileau's discussion was therefore a current question; and that was the first phase of the quarrel.—At a meeting of the French Academy on January 27, 1687,



Charles Perrault read a poem entitled *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*, in which he eulogised some great writers, whose work made that century comparable to those of Pericles and Augustus. Boileau protested and left the meeting. Perrault took up the subject again and developed his thesis in his *Parallèle des anciens et des modernes* (1668-1696); and Boileau replied to him by his *Réflexions sur Longin* (1694).—La Bruyère, in his *Discours à l'Académie française* (1693), affected to praise only the partisans of the ancients; he excited lively opposition, especially in *Le Mercure*, to which he replied by his preface. Mme Dacier published in 1699 a translation of Homer, which again gave rise to the most agitated discussion. This second phase of the quarrel was ended by Arnould, who brought about a reconciliation between Perrault and Boileau (*Lettre de Boileau*, 1701) (1).

—The quarrel broke out again in 1714, when an abridged translation of Homer was brought out by La Motte-Houdard (a translation intended to discredit that of Mme Dacier).—Correspondence between La Motte and Fénelon (1713-1714).



CHARLES PERRAULT

From the portrait painted by Sortebat (1652-1718)  
and engraved by Gérard Edelinck (1649-1707).

(1) We have collected all the documents relative to this part of the quarrel in our edition of *Boileau* (Hatier), pp. 427-500. Consult also the notes to *L'Art poétique*, Canto III, pp. 232-256.

—Fénelon's letter to the French Academy (1744).—*Preface* to the translation of the *Odyssey*, by M.me Dacier (1716).—Reciprocal concessions, and a sham reconciliation.

The question was not well presented on either side; the discussion was almost limited to personalities, and almost never touched upon the real arguments. Both parties lacked the historical spirit, and dealt with details. *Per-rault* was much less anxious to proclaim equality of genius between *Racine* and *Euripides*, *Boileau* and *Horace*, than to discredit all who had imitated the ancients—uselessly, according to his idea—and to rehabilitate those who were exclusively modern, the victims of *Boileau*. *Boileau*, on his part, did not defend *Homer* and *Pindar* skilfully, and did not know how to formulate an adequate theory as to the imitation of the ancients except in the VII *Réflexion sur Longin* (1). Fénelon alone had a glimpse of a few critical reasons, to which we shall revert later.

**The Consequences of the Quarrel.**—The real victors were the moderns, and the eighteenth century ignored antiquity. We see the idea of progress develop and society's confidence in itself and scorn of tradition (*Encyclopédie*). But the encyclopedic spirit, by doubting Christianity, deprived itself of the most serious element in the originality of contemporary writers. The reaction inspired by *Chateaubriand* was necessary in order to correct the theories of the moderns.

This quarrel was, then, important in itself, for, though often puerile in details, it contained all the characteristics of the eighteenth century.

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(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 610; *Boileau* (Hatier) p. 470.



TRIUMPH OF AMPHITRITE

Decorative frieze by Jean Lepautre (1618-1682).

## CHAPTER XIII.

### FÉNELON (1651-1715).

#### SUMMARY

1° **FÉNELON** (1651-1715), at first superior of the "New Catholics," became in 1689 tutor to the Duke de Bourgogne. In 1695 he was Archbishop of Cambrai. The **quietism** affair, and the publication of **Télémaque** brought him into dis-favour.—His character was complex, fascinating and idealistic.

2° In his **Traité de l'éducation des filles** (1689), Fénelon gives useful and judicious advice to mothers; he is moderate and sensible, and anticipates, on several points, our modern pedagogy,

3° **Tutor** to a very difficult child, Fénelon succeeded in mastering and instructing him. It was for him he composed **Fables**, **Dialogues des morts** and **Télémaque** (1699), in which we find echoes of nearly all Greek literature.—His contemporaries found in this work a satire upon Louis XIV and his government.

4° **Le Traité de l'existence de Dieu** (1712-1718), probably a youthful work, the first part of which is devoted to the development of the proof from final causes, and the second to a **Cartesian** demonstration of the divinity.

5° In the **Dialogues sur l'éloquence** (1680 ?), Fénelon severely criticises the orators of his day. He was himself a remarkable preacher, noted for his facility and unction: but we only possess two of his official discourses.

6° The **Lettre à l'Académie** was written in 1713 to M. Dacier and published in 1716. In this, Fénelon proves himself, upon certain points, such as eloquence and history, a very clear-sighted critic, and betrays his preference for the ancients.

7° **Quietism** is the doctrine of **pure love for God**, propagated in France by Mme Guyon. Bossuet had it condemned; Fénelon, after long evading the condemnation, submitted to it.

8° What the eighteenth century loved in Fénelon was his **tolerance**, his attitude as a **disgraced prelate**, and his criticism.

9° As a writer, Fénelon is **aristocratic** and **Attic**.



DECORATED LETTER  
of the XVII century.

place apart in the history of ideas and letters in the seventeenth century must be given to Fénelon. He already represented the change to a new order of things, less by the dates of his works than by the spirit which animated them.

**Biography.** — François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon was born in the château of Fénelon in the Périgord, in 1651. He belonged to a noble family, and always had the manners and sentiments of a very great lord. — Urged by a most sincere vocation, he entered very early the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, and at first intended to devote himself to the Levantine missions. But this he was compelled to renounce on account of the weak state of his health, and he was appointed superior of the "New Catholics," a house where Protestant young girls converted to Catholicism were taught the catechism. He fulfilled these delicate functions from 1678 to 1689, with all the necessary intelligence and tact. It was then he composed his first work, the *Traité de l'éducation des filles*.

After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, Fénelon was charged with a mission to the Protestants of the Aunis and the Saintonge. He made use of persuasion and gentleness.

It was in 1689 that the Duke de Beauvilliers, governor of the young Duke de Bourgogne, chose Fénelon as tutor to the grandson of Louis XIV. Bossuet, who held Fénelon in high esteem, greatly approved of this choice. We shall see how the master succeeded with his pupil, and what works resulted later from his six years' tutorship.

In 1693, Fénelon was elected to the French Academy. Two years later he was appointed Archbishop of Cambrai, and consecrated by Bossuet in the Chapel of Saint-Cyr. Everything seemed to assure him the most tranquil existence, when the quietism affair came to spoil it all. Soon afterwards, the publication of *Télémaque* (1699) — in which everyone saw, with a readiness which compromised the author, a satire upon Louis XIV and his government, completed Fénelon's disgrace: and until the end of his life, he remained shut up in his diocese of Cambrai, like an exile.

Fénelon had placed all his hopes in the Duke de Bourgogne, and many critics have said, dreamed of becoming some day, if not his minister, at least his spiritual and political director; but the death of the prince, in 1712, ruined these hopes of restored favour. Fénelon then devoted the last years of his life to the vigilant and paternal administration of his diocese, and to a rather energetic struggle against Jansenism. He died at Cambrai on January 7, 1715.

**His Character.** — This admirable portrait of Fénelon by Saint-Simon is well





FÉNELON

From the portrait painted by Jôseph Vivien (1657-1735) and engraved by Benoit I Audran (1661-1721).

known : " This prelate was a tall, thin, well-made man, pale, with a large nose, and eyes from which fire and intellect poured like a torrent, and a physiognomy such as I have never seen elsewhere, and which once seen could never be forgotten. It contained every element of contrary kinds, but all was harmonious. It had gravity and gallantry, seriousness and gaiety, it revealed equally the doctor, the bishop, the great lord ; what predominated in it, as in his whole person, were delicacy, intellect, the graces, decency and above everything nobility. It required an effort to cease looking at him..... He was accustomed to a domination, which, though gentle, brooked no resistance..... With all his art, and his ardent desire to please everybody, there was nothing low, common or affected or out of place, but everything was well regulated..... Taking him all in all, he was a great intellect and a great man. "

The impression left by this portrait, drawn by a contemporary in whom, for once, clear-sightedness was not spoiled by ill-nature, may be summed up in the word contrasts. Nobody could have been indifferent to Fénelon, for he possessed in himself a singular mixture of fascination and hauteur, of tenderness and authority, of superior intelligence and persistence in his own ideas.

Some of those whom he charmed at first, he disappointed and irritated. Those whom he astonished one day by the profundity and generosity of certain political views, he soon disappointed by utopian ideas and the fanciful tendency so truly perceived by Louis XIV. It is no less true that, taking him as a whole, he is most interesting by this very complexity, less that of an individual than of an epoch.

**The *Traité de l'éducation des filles* (1689).** — It was at the request of Madame de Beauvilliers, mother of eight daughters, that Fénelon wrote this charming little book. But fortunately he went far beyond the advice proper for the daughters of the duchess, thanks to his experience as director of the *Nouvelles Catholiques*, and the result was a real treatise, whose ideas have even now great value.

Fénelon first establishes (chap. i) the importance of the education of girls, and the objections to their usual education (chap. ii). " We should fear to make them absurdly learned... But ill-educated and inattentive girls always have a wandering imagination... They cultivate a visionary mind by accustoming themselves to the magnificent language of the heroes of novels... What disgust they must then feel when they descend from heroism to the most trivial details of housekeeping! " (1)—In this respect Fénelon agreed with Mme de Maintenon, who felt, as he did, that a reaction was needed against the superficial instruction given to women. Doubtless, a century as rich as that one in superior women, before Fénelon's time, could not have absolutely neglected feminine education. But, in the absence of all method, it was only the finest intellects that soared, and even they were at the mercy of subtlety and romanticism.—Fénelon afterwards asked that education should begin for girls from their infancy, and in that respect he surprises us by his correct physiological observations. Like Rousseau he wanted the earliest studies to be proportioned to the weakness of the child (chap. iii, iv, v). " The brain of a child is like a candle lighted in the wind : its light is always uncert-

ain." Also, their questions must be promptly and clearly answered, and must be inspired by the sight of objects whose nature and utility should be explained (object-lessons); to suggest ideas to them, pictures should be chosen which it is proper they should remember; and always render study pleasant to them. On this point Fénelon insists urgently, perhaps too urgently; according to his idea, the child should almost ignore that study requires an effort. But this is only the exaggeration of an excellent principle, which is to make work attractive by interesting oneself in it, and making the child feel that it is a pleasure as well as a profit to learn. — Fénelon believes the child should play, and always simple games. — He is not opposed to means which may encourage the child to study, such as emulation, well placed praise, rewards (chap. vi). — Chapters vii and viii are devoted to the study of religion. Here Fénelon recommends very simple questions, and the use especially of narratives and parables from the Bible, to give the child concrete and not abstract ideas of religion. He wants a reasonable and sensible religion. "Nothing must be mingled with faith and the pious practices of religion which was not drawn from the Gospel, or authorised by the constant approval of the Church... Accustom girls therefore, naturally too credulous, not to believe lightly in certain stories which are unauthorised, and not to attach themselves to certain devotions, introduced by indiscreet zeal, without waiting for the approval of the Church." Fénelon adds a few very intelligent and tolerant precepts as to defense of their belief against Protestant criticism. In chapter ix we have some ingenious *Remarques sur plusieurs défauts des filles*: they must be taught to speak briefly and precisely, to avoid slyness, "which always comes from an ignoble heart and a petty mind." All this passage on the subtleties of the mind is excellent; and Fénelon did not remember them often enough during the quarrel about quietism.—A witty chapter, the tenth, is devoted to *La Vanité de la beauté et des ajustements*. "I should like to show young girls," he wrote, "the noble simplicity of the statues and other figures we still possess of Greek and Roman women; they would see in these how pleasing and majestic are a loose knot of hair at the back of the head, and full, flowing draperies, in long folds. It would be well if they could listen to painters and others who have this exquisite taste for antiquity. Without being at all singular, they could cultivate a taste for this simple dress, so noble and graceful, and besides so appropriate to Christian morality". He wishes, in fact, to make young girls modest; and especially, that nothing in their dress should be too fine for their social position. Another important precept is to show them the vanity of over-refined wit.—In chapter xi we have practical precepts on the duties of women. "Learning for women, as for men, should be adjusted to their respective duties; the difference between their studies." Women should be capable of educating their children, of overlooking and keeping their households. On this last point, Fénelon says very truly: "It is good order, and not certain sordid economies, which ends in the greatest profit." He would have a woman know how to arrange and clean.—It is also a science to get oneself properly served; and in this connection what piquant observations he makes upon domestics! "Make girls understand that mankind was not made to be served; that service, having been established contrary to the natural equality of men, must be made as easy as possible; that masters, who are better brought up than their valets, being full of faults, it must not be expected that their valets will have none, they who have had no instruction or good example (1)" (chap. XII)... In this same chapter Fénelon requires that "A girl should be taught to read and write correctly;" that she should know grammar, orthography, the four ar-

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 616. In the sermons and moral treatises of the seventeenth century are to be found numbers of observations of this kind, concerning the equality among men and the duty of treating servants justly. The difference between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on this point is that the latter spoke in the name of social equality, and the former in the name of equality before the Deity, and of Christian charity.



ihmetical rules ; a little common law for the administration of her fortune and estate ; of Greek and Roman history, and the history of France and neighbouring countries. It was then the fashion for girls to learn Italian and Spanish ; but Fénelon preferred Latin. In the reading of works of eloquence and poetry, he would have an "exact sobriety ;"

and the same precaution in connection with music and painting. A general observation terminates and dominates this long chapter : " In educating a young girl, we should consider her social position, the places where she will live — Finally, in the thirteenth and last chapter, Fénelon adds some judicious remarks on nurses.



*Les trois Enfants de France*

THE THREE CHILDREN OF FRANCE, PUPILS OF FÉNELON  
The Duke d'Anjou, the little Duke de Berry, and the Duke de  
Bourgogne, the eldest of the three.

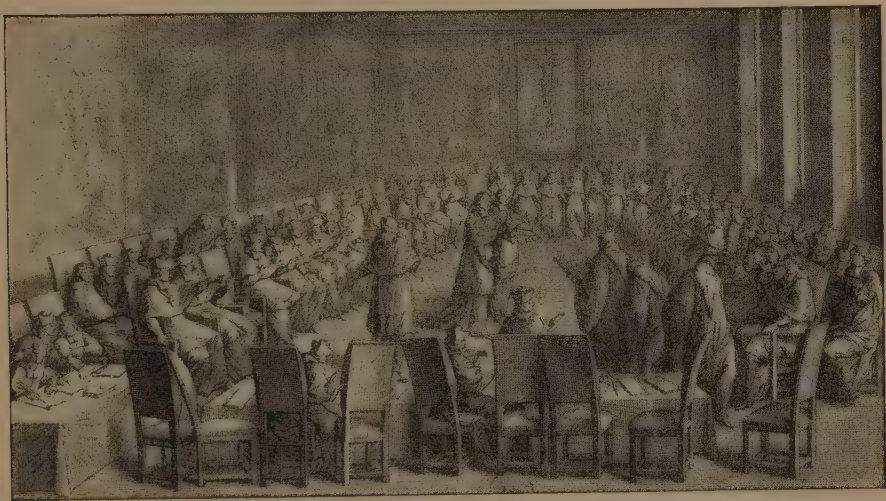
In many respects this treatise may seem insufficient to us. But it must be judged in its own time, and Fénelon congratulated for having shown in his first work so much common sense and justness, without yielding to the fancies which were before long to be mingled with his best theories. The style is characterised by an elegant simplicity and is perfectly natural ; one would almost say the work had been written by a woman.

**Fénelon as Tutor to the Duke de Bourgogne.** — Fénelon had for pupils the three sons of the Grand Dauphin : the Duke de Bourgogne, heir presumptive, the Duke d'Anjou (who became King of Spain), and the Duke de Berry. The name of the first is the best remembered, because he early assumed more political importance, and because his brothers appear to have been more docile and less intelligent. According to Saint-Simon, the young Duke " was born a terrible child, harsh



in speech, and given to extreme fits of anger... furiously impetuous... excessively obstinate... naturally inclined to cruelty, and barbarous in his raillery..." And Fénelon himself, in his fables, his *Dialogues des Morts*, and *Télémaque*, has several times represented the Duke de Bourgogne with all his caprices, his insolent pride, and his reactions full of candour (1).

This nature, rich and given to excess, Fénelon and the Duke de Beauvillier subjected to an appropriate discipline. His studies were especially practical:



A NATIONAL COUNCIL IN THE XVII CENTURY

From a print by P.-F. Giffart.

and, if we except Latin, considered rather as mental discipline, we see that they were chiefly composed of history and politics. Religion was spread over it all: strict and profound, but manly and separated from any mystic devotion. Finally, the program was completed by all kinds of physical exercises, suitable for a man who was to command armies.

In all this, Fénelon's true part was the moral education of the prince. With admirable patience, by means of lessons drawn from life, and pedagogical artifices without end, as well as by appealing to his honour, his sense of religion and his affection, he succeeded in conquering the boy (2). Perhaps he succeeded too well, for the Duke de Bourgogne, when he grew to manhood, was somewhat hesitating and timid. But he was honest, and had a sense of his

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 274.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 273.

duties, and if a premature death had not interfered, his succession to the throne would at least have saved the nation from the deplorable reign of Louis XV.

**Works composed for the Duke de Bourgogne.** — 1° **Les Fables.** — The greater part of these are short pastorals, in which we feel the author's genuine taste for nature as well as his fanciful spirit, for it was easy for Fénelon to imagine that shepherds are essentially virtuous and poetic. These, however, are only short pieces of fiction composed for their moral effect, pedagogical writings intended for a pupil (1).

2° **Les Dialogues des Morts.** — Following a method made illustrious among the Greeks by Lucian, Fénelon supposes that two characters, historical or literary, meet in Hades, or in the Elysian Fields, and exchange their ideas, impressions and theories. The genre is in itself one of the falsest, since it creates a dialogue on one theme between individuals of very different times, who could not have known each other, and between whom there is nothing in common. But for a teacher, it was an ingenious means.—Sometimes the speakers are two contemporary personages who carry on a conversation they are supposed to have held during their lives; sometimes the characters are illustrious writers, like Virgil and Horace, who exchange compliments and mutually confess their faults with the candour of departed spirits (2); or Demosthenes and Cicero, who define and compare each other (this dialogue is excellent). Or else it is the brilliant, capricious Alcibiades talking with Socrates or Pericles, about philosophy and politics. (Alcibiades seems to be the pupil, and Fénelon is convinced that he himself unites the wisdom of Socrates with the political genius of Pericles). Then, there are dialogues upon true patriotism; the dying Bayard reproaches Constable de Bourbon with his treason (3); Commynes teaches Louis XI that a king is responsible to posterity, etc. All the great kings, Louis XII, François I, Henri IV, and great ministers like Richelieu are brought in to receive or give lessons, from which the successor of Louis XIV may profit.

3° **Télémaque.** — This is Fénelon's best-known work. Its reputation is world-wide, and every nation possesses a translation.—How was it composed? Fénelon, who never separated, in his pedagogical system, the literary instruction of his pupils from their political education, undertook to teach them Greek poetry while at the same time training them for the career of a king. He supposes himself continuing the fourth book of the Odyssey, where young Télémaque is starting off in search of his father Ulysses. While Homer takes Telemachus only to Pylos and Sparta, and brings him back to Ithaca, whither Ulysses himself is soon to return, Fénelon prolongs the voyages of the prince to Phœnicia, Egypt, Cyprus, Crete, Hades, and to the island of Calypso, where Télémaque himself relates part of his adventures. Fénelon enshrines in this voyage all the episodes he can borrow from Greek poets and historians, and so extensively, that an attentive reading of *Télémaque*, in an edition where the sources are given, is one of the most instructive a student can undertake (4).

**Politics and Satire in *Télémaque*.** — But this was not Fénelon's true object. What he wished to do was to use each episode as a means of giving a lesson in morality or government to the future king; and it was because of this that *Télémaque* was considered a veritable satire on the character and politics of

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 618.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 621.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 269.

(4) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 623.

Louis XIV. It is evident that books X and XI, in which the wise man, Mentor, draws up a constitution for Salente, contain Fénelon's ideas: and as he did not approve of war, or luxury, or royal absolutism, this exposition of his program seemed to be directed against Louis XIV's manner of living and governing. Furthermore, these theories given in his novel were confirmed by Fénelon in his *Lettre à Louis XIV* (1), in *L'Examen de conscience sur les devoirs de la royauté*, and in his *Mémoires concernant la guerre de la succession d'Espagne*.

Fénelon denied having intended any satire on Louis XIV. He wrote to Father Le Tellier, after the surreptitious publication of *Télémaque*: "To have had the intention of drawing satirical and insolent portraits, I should have had to be the most ungrateful or foolish of men. I hold such an intention in horror". According to the opinion of the court, the character of Idoménée, who loved to excess war, luxury and pleasure, represented the king himself, while Protésilas was Louvois, etc. It is certain that, like Bourdaloue, Fénelon had a success which he had not foreseen. He was obliged to warn his pupils against pomp and war, and to inspire them with distrust of ministers who were hard to the point of cruelty. Also, he had to warn them, straightforwardly, against the dangers of love. How then, could he help it if these historical and poetical portraits seemed, necessarily, to be those of a Louis XIV, a Louvois and a Madame de Montespan? Fénelon said in the same letter: "The more my book is read, the more it will be seen that I wished to say everything without painting anybody."

It was in 1699 that the first edition of *Télémaque* appeared without Fénelon's knowledge. A dishonest copyist gave the manuscript to the publisher, Barbin, who hastened to print it. We may believe Fénelon's protests against this publication which was altogether inopportune for him, coming as it did in the same year when his quietism had caused his condemnation at Rome, and which contributed to render his disfavour definitive.

The literary merit of the work assured it enduring success. Although this "poetic prose" seems a little monotonous on the whole, and too continuously elegant, yet it is characterised by the most refined and distinguished suppleness, and by an atmosphere of rejuvenated antiquity, which are unique in French literature.

**The Traité de l'existence de Dieu.** — The first part of this treatise appeared in 1712, without Fénelon's approval. It is probably a youthful work, which he did not revise and which exhibits the poetic freshness and prolixity of a facile genius. This part is devoted to a demonstration of God by the spectacle of the universe and the study of its laws (final causes). — The second part, not published till 1718, is metaphysical, and inspired by a subtle and bold cartesianism.

**Dialogues sur l'Éloquence.** — This is also a work of Fénelon's youth, and was not published until after his death. There are three *Dialogues*, lacking the life and mo-

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 632.

movement which make the charm of Plato's work. The three interlocutors are merely designed by the letters A, B, and C. The character called "A" is Fénelon himself, who disputes the good-natured objections of B. The character C advances, generally, worldly and profane theories. In the first dialogue, Fénelon criticises fashionable preachers, whom he accuses of a desire to please and to shine intellectually. Here he draws a remarkable parallel between Demosthenes and Isocrates, the orator and the rhetorician. — In the second part, Fénelon treats of the three elements of eloquence: to instruct, to please, to touch (1). A severely drawn portrait of the orator who makes too much use of divisions and reasoning is probably that of Bourdaloue. — The third deals with the Christian sources of eloquence: the Gospel and the Fathers.

It is perhaps surprising to see Fénelon's harsh or indignant irony against the preachers of an epoch always regarded as the most brilliant in Christian eloquence. But we should not forget that he is very sensitive about everything which seems to him to swerve from the simplicity of the ancients, that he conceives the sermon as a sort of homily, in which earnestness should supersede eloquence, and that he is not considering the superior geniuses of his time (except Bourdaloue who displeased him), but the mass of fashionable preachers. A few years later, La Bruyère was equally severe in his chapter *De la Chaire*.

**Fénelon as Preacher.** — Critical as he was of the preachers of his day, has Fénelon left among his sermons any masterpieces equal to those of Bossuet or Bourdaloue? — His contemporaries had a very high opinion of his eloquence, full both of warmth and earnestness. Fénelon must have brought to his sermons that distinguished facility, and flowery abundance which charm us in the style of his works. But it is now almost impossible to draw any comparison between him and his rivals, because we only possess two complete sermons and a few fragments; and their official character doubtless nullified the most original part of the orator's talent. — The first complete sermon is the *Sermon pour la fête de l'Épiphanie*, pronounced on January 6, 1685, in the Chapel for Foreign Missions in presence of the Siamese ambassadors. Fénelon rejoices at the progress of faith in the Orient; but he rejoices with trembling, fearing the increase of impiety in the Occident. Upon this second point, he draws a serious and prophetic picture of moral corruption (2). — The second sermon was preached on May 1, 1707, at Lille, for the *Sacre de l'archevêque de Cologne*. This discourse, too little known, is a complete program of the relations between Church and State. "The Church has no need of help from the princes of the earth; — princes may be useful to her, provided they humiliate themselves." This is a truly historical document, comparable to the sermons in which Bossuet speaks of the *Devoirs des rois*, and of the *Politique tirée de l'Écriture sainte*.

Except these two official discourses, Fénelon disdained, like Bossuet, to preserve his sermons; we have not even any of those authoritative sketches or outlines which may be collected and published. But he was incontestably a preacher of the greatest talent, and altogether consistent with his own theory of Christian eloquence.

**La Lettre à l'Académie.** — We know the circumstances which gave birth much later on to the *Lettre à l'Académie*. M. Dacier, perpetual secretary of the French Academy, had invited the members of the company to express their views concerning occupations which seemed to them the most useful (1713). Fénelon replied, from Cambrai, by a *Mémoire*, which seemed sufficiently interesting to be printed. Fénelon then asked

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 626

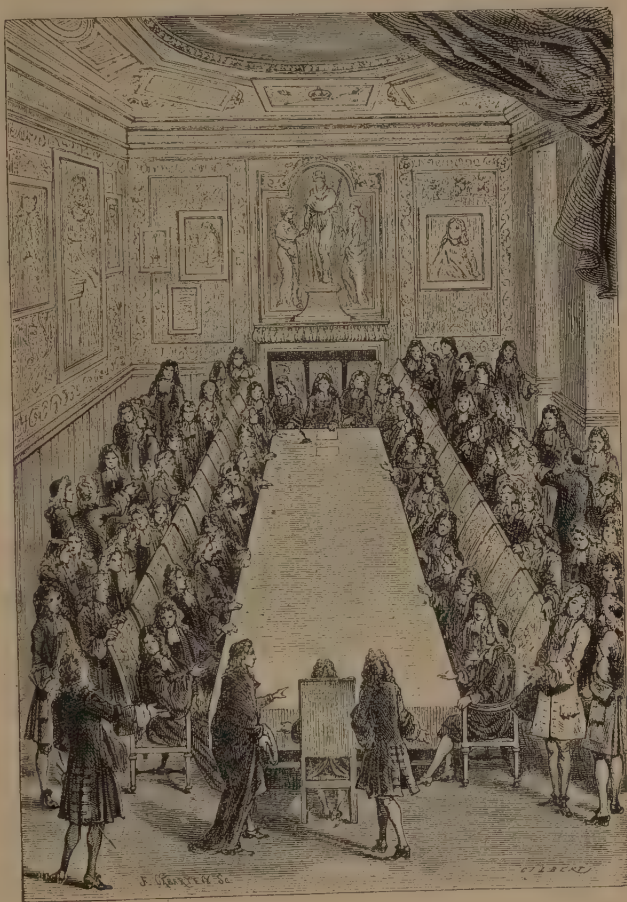
(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 629.



permission to see his MS. again, and wrote his *Lettre à l'Académie*, which was not published until a year after his death (1716).

The *Lettre à l'Académie* is divided into ten chapters: — I. *Le Dictionnaire*; II. *La Grammaire*; III. *Projet d'enrichir la langue*; IV. *Rhétorique*; V. *Poétique*; VI. *La Tragédie*; VII. *La Comédie*; VIII. *L'Histoire*; IX. *Réfutation de quelques objections*; X. *Les Anciens et les modernes*. It must not be supposed that in each of these paragraphs is to be found a methodical treatise on the question. The *Lettre* is more like an easy conversation, containing one observation after another drawn from a reading of the ancients, from experience and from taste.

It contains very true and very suggestive critical opinions on Rhetoric, in which Fénelon returns to his ideas in the *Dialogues*, and on History, and other opinions more open to discussion, though accompanied by excellent ideas on poetry, tragedy, comedy and above all a project for enriching the language. Called upon to speak, in the last chapter, concerning the quarrel of the ancients and moderns, he evades the subject with the courtesy of a great lord who fears to disoblige his adversaries. But his hesitation itself is a reply; and as he draws from the works of the ancients all the examples which he presents as models and lessons to the writers of his time (Sophocles versus Racine, Terence versus Molière, Demosthenes and the Fathers versus



A SESSION OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY, AT THE LOUVRE IN 1714

From a print of the beginning of the XVIII century.

modern orators, etc.), the conclusion must be that the *Lettre à l'Académie* is a plea in favour of the ancients.

**Quietism.** — A Spanish monk, named Molinos, had imagined a sort of moral and religious mysticism, which consisted of pure love for God and dispensed with all acts of faith and piety; the faithful had nothing to do but exist in the most complete repose, quietism (from the Latin word *quies*). Molinos was condemned at Rome. A young widow, Mme Guyon, adopted this doctrine, and by means of her words and her books, disseminated it in Switzerland, Savoy, and then in Paris. — At first its heresy was not perceived. Mme de Maintenon fell under the fascination of the doctrine, and also Fénelon. — But Bossuet, who guarded orthodoxy, and suspected all novelties, intervened. He caused an ecclesiastical commission to be appointed to examine Mme Guyon's books and to interrogate her. Conferences were held at Issy, and a profession of faith drawn up which, Mme Guyon, and all who were interested in her doctrine — including Fénelon, already Archbishop of Cambrai — signed with perfect docility (1695). However, Mme Guyon beginning again to promulgate her quietism here and there, she was arrested and imprisoned at Vincennes.

Bossuet, who always wished to set right questions of dogma, then wrote his *Instructions sur les états d'oraison* (1697). Fénelon, on his part, and despite the letter in which he had made his submission, published the *Maximes des saints*, in which he set forth the true and the false opinion upon every point of mysticism. Bossuet considered this book heretical, and the matter was taken before the court at Rome. After this, there was a continual exchange of letters and memoirs between the two adversaries. To this discussion Bossuet brought the ardour of his apostolic temperament, his authority of "Père de l'Église," as well as a certain degree of violence which exceeded the limits of courteous polemics. Fénelon was more elusive, he defended himself while retreating; he disavowed, but with reservations; he irritated his adversary by his reticence and distinctions, But Bossuet was victor. On March 12, 1699, the book of the *Maximes des saints* was put on the Index. This time Fénelon submitted with complete abnegation. It is related that, entering the pulpit at the moment when the news of his condemnation was brought to him, he preached on obedience.

Let us not be deceived, nor doubt that under these theological quarrels grave human and philosophical questions were hidden. It was not only important for orthodox Catholicism that Fénelon was vanquished by Bossuet, for the latter again represented the struggle of common sense against a dangerous utopia.

**Why Fénelon was loved in the Eighteenth Century.** — The eighteenth century, which had little tenderness for ecclesiastics, and was harsh to Bossuet, was enthusiastic about Fénelon. What were its reasons?

1° Fénelon was in political and religious disfavour;

2° He was in disfavour because he had his own opinions: in politics, *Télémaque*; in religion, quietism;

3° In spite of this disfavour, and his condemnation by Rome, he was virtuous and benevolent; he was not so, therefore, only because of Christianity, but because of his "love for humanity":

4° As a critic, he was a kind of innovator, in his *Lettre à l'Académie*.

But the eighteenth century ill understood Fénelon, and misrepresented his character. It represented him as much more tolerant than he was, or could have been, in his century; and it regarded as a victim of despotism one of the most absolute as well as the most skilful of minds. Nevertheless, in politics and criticism it was right in considering him a precursor.

**Fénelon's Style.** — Fénelon's style is as difficult to define as his personality. More than anything, it is characterized by aristocratic ease, and has the tone of the most exquisite conversation. It is Attic in its temperate and supple elegance. It is rich in metaphor and poetic without boldness or artifice; one would say that involuntary memories of Homer and Plato come to flower and perfume it. Its fault is a too continuous mildness, but even this has its charm.



PORTRAIT OF MADAME GUYON AT 44 YEARS

From the print engraved by Breen.

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PAGE ORNAMENT BY SÉBASTIEN LE CLERC (1637-1714)





DECORATIVE FRIEZE BY GABRIEL DE SAINT-AUBIN (1724-1780)

## FOURTH PART

# The Eighteenth Century

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### CHAPTER I.

## GENERAL SURVEY OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

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### SUMMARY

1° It is difficult to define the boundary line between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. We have to consider the dates of dominating **influences**; thus, Bayle, whose **Dictionnaire** appeared in 1697, was contemporary with the **Lettres Persanes** (1721).—The eighteenth century divides itself clearly enough into two periods: 1715-1750 and 1750-1789.

2° The **court** was no longer the centre of taste; the king reigned, but did not govern; the salons became all-powerful, and **opinion** controlled reputations.

3° **Philosophy** gave up metaphysical and moral questions in favour of social and political discussions.—Religion, enfeebled by the theological quarrels of

the seventeenth century, was badly defended.—The eighteenth century returned to the ideas of the sixteenth.

4° There was no longer a **literature**, properly speaking. The originality of this century lay in works of history, science, law and in social polemics.

5° **Sciences** developed in France as well as in foreign countries, and the discovery of their practical **application** was begun.—The **Arts** went through a crisis of affectation, but were restored to antique simplicity by David.

6° Foreign nations spoke French and imitated French works; but it was the period of European **cosmopolitanism**, and France imitated especially England: Locke, Swift, Pope, Richardson.

## I. — PRINCIPAL DATES IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY



DECORATED LETTER  
of the XVIII century.

In literature and in history dates do not indicate fixed boundaries of time; but it may be said that the change from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, and still more from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century was somewhat sudden. This happens when great historical facts, such as the Reformation and the Revolution, interrupt the slow and normal development of ideas and forms of art. But between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the change was almost imperceptible.

In what year did the literary and philosophical eighteenth century begin? On one hand, some classical writers, like Boileau, did not die until 1711. On the other hand, Fontenelle, who in 1701 was already forty-three years old, must be connected with the eighteenth century; and Bayle published in 1697 his *Dictionnaire*, which was, so to speak, the *Encyclopédie*, in its first state. Regnard, who is always connected with the eighteenth century, died in 1709, before Boileau and Fénelon, Thomas Corneille and Fléchier. In short neither the year 1701, nor the death of Louis XIV in 1715, marks a real limit. So the influence of works rather than their dates ought to be considered. Thus, Bayle's influence was not felt until the Regency, and for that reason the *Dictionnaire* of 1697 must be regarded as contemporary with the *Lettres Persanes* of 1721.

In itself, the eighteenth century divides into two very distinct parts almost exactly at the year 1750, the date of J.-J. Rousseau's first *Discours*. Montesquieu and Fontenelle died about this time; and Voltaire left France to stay in Berlin, whence he returned altogether a « philosopher. » From that time, in

salons and in books, all was propaganda and discussion of ideas and theories, until sentiment and sensibility returned with Rousseau.

## II. — SOCIETY AND OPINION

**The Court.** — From the first years of the eighteenth century the court lost its dominant influence. It was not because — at least, until the Revolution — its influence was disregarded, nor because the king's favour was any less useful and valued. But neither Louis XIV, then ageing, nor especially Louis XV, sought any longer to influence either public taste or opinion. Nothing confirms the influence of Louis XIV until 1700 more than the uncertainty and disarray which succeeded the harmonious unity imposed by his strong personality. At the court of Louis XV, parties were opposed to one another, and were successively in the ascendant. A change of minister would upset every question; the king reigned, but did not govern. Beside this divided court, where etiquette preserved all its tyranny, and ideas were as oppressed as manners, rose the powerful influence of the salons.

**The Salons.** — If the first salons of the eighteenth century, like the Court of Sceaux and the salon of Madame de Lambert, were frivolous or *précieux*, that of Mme de Tencin, and especially those of Mme du Deffand and Mme Geoffrin, had already become centres of philosophical conversation. These reunions were characterised, first, by the more intimate mingling of different classes of society: noblemen were no longer the protectors of men of letters or scientists, nor believed they were honouring them by treating them as equals. They, themselves, practised literature and science; whether they were connected with the army, with courts of justice, or with finance, they felt that power, in future, lay in the hands of those who wielded the pen. From this time forward, the highest aristocracy was that of the intellect. — Conversation, though it had its moments of trifling, turned by preference to scientific, political and economic subjects. There was no question any longer of drawing literary portraits, of organising trips to the country, comparing sonnets, or even composing maxims; at the dinners and evening parties of the rue de Beaune or the rue Saint-Honoré, the guests reformed the State, reorganised finance, redressed abuses, prepared the way to the night of August 4, or the Rights of Man; or else they discussed an astronomical or physical discovery, or listened attentively and with pleasure to some savant who popularised his speciality. The nobility, who felt less and less interest in current affairs of State, were at the head of the movement. Without doubt, they prepared the Revolution, without having foreseen its consequences; the nobility emigrated before the returning wave of the ideas they had themselves launched.

**Opinion.** — Thanks to the salons, and also to a wider reading of small newspapers, pamphlets, and of theatrical pieces full of allusions or theses, a new power was formed, namely, public opinion. A literary work was no longer justified by the court, or by the good taste of connoisseurs or the initiated, but by the broader suffrage, freer and better informed, of that enlightened community which included great lords, high magistrates, writers, amateurs, women, theatre-going clerks, and « poor devils ». There spread a mysterious undefinable power, more efficacious day by day, which braved the censorship and favoured the counterfeits of Holland or Geneva; a power which forced some degree of tolerance upon the government and brought about the completion of the *Encyclopédie*. It was by flattering public opinion, and bracing himself upon it, that Voltaire, creating a common soul in the social body, taught the nation how to be formidable to kings, and in its turn to use intimidation.

### III. — PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

**Philosophy.** — All the ideas and claims of the eighteenth century, in which institutions and beliefs were destroyed in order to be reconstructed, are covered by the word philosophy, the meaning of which it is necessary to define.

In the seventeenth century, philosophy meant systems of metaphysics, psychology or ethics; and to these were added logic, or the art of reasoning. Descartes, Pascal, Bossuet, Malebranche were philosophers in the complete traditional sense of the word. — In the eighteenth century, under the influence of Locke's « Essay on the Human Understanding » (1690), and of Bayle, metaphysics and psychology were abandoned for experimental and social philosophy. Doubtless, people still believed that it was possible to discuss the existence of God, the immortality of the soul or the passions; but to what end? Were there not other subjects directly before them whose immediate solution must be more advantageous for the happiness of mankind? « Let us occupy ourselves less », they said, « with the attributes of the Deity, the limits of divine prescience and of human liberty, the knowledge and best use of our passions, and more with ameliorating the procedure in courts of justice which we can at once improve, reforming the political institutions in the midst of which we live, correcting the inequalities of wealth by a better division of taxes, acquiring liberty of conscience, and assuring to everybody a little comfort, etc. As to morals properly so called, it is each one's affair to watch over his own; true morality consists in not injuring one's neighbour. »

Nevertheless, all these philosophers, who had abandoned with disdain metaphysical or psychological speculations, were not much more practical for that.



In the first place, they accommodated themselves perfectly to existing abuses, and profited by them. The noblemen did not renounce any of their privileges, and the financiers contributed to the ruin of the country. And as their fine reformatory zeal could not have immediate effects, they gave themselves up gladly to dreams of Utopia, and developed their systems to the point of absurd-



VOLTAIRE AND ROUSSEAU, RECONCILED IN IMMORTALITY, ARE GUIDED TOWARDS THE PANTHEON  
BY GENIUS

*From a coloured print of the beginning of the XIX century.*

Rousseau comes forward with wild flowers in his hand, carrying his « *Contrat social* » and the partition of the « *Devin de village* »; his « *Emile* » is symbolized by children playing quite freely; in the background one can see a landscape which reminds of Montmorency or Ermenonville — Voltaire, « *La Henriade* » and « *Le Dictionnaire philosophique* » under his arm, leaves his good city of Paris, where the statue of Henry the Fourth, Notre-Dame and the Théâtre-Français (nowadays Odéon) keep his remembrance.

ity. Look at Rousseau or Diderot ! Voltaire alone — and there lay the secret of his popularity — tackled real things. He did not content himself with making phrases about liberty of conscience, but acted in favour of Calas and Sirven ; he fought definite abuses and indicated remedies.

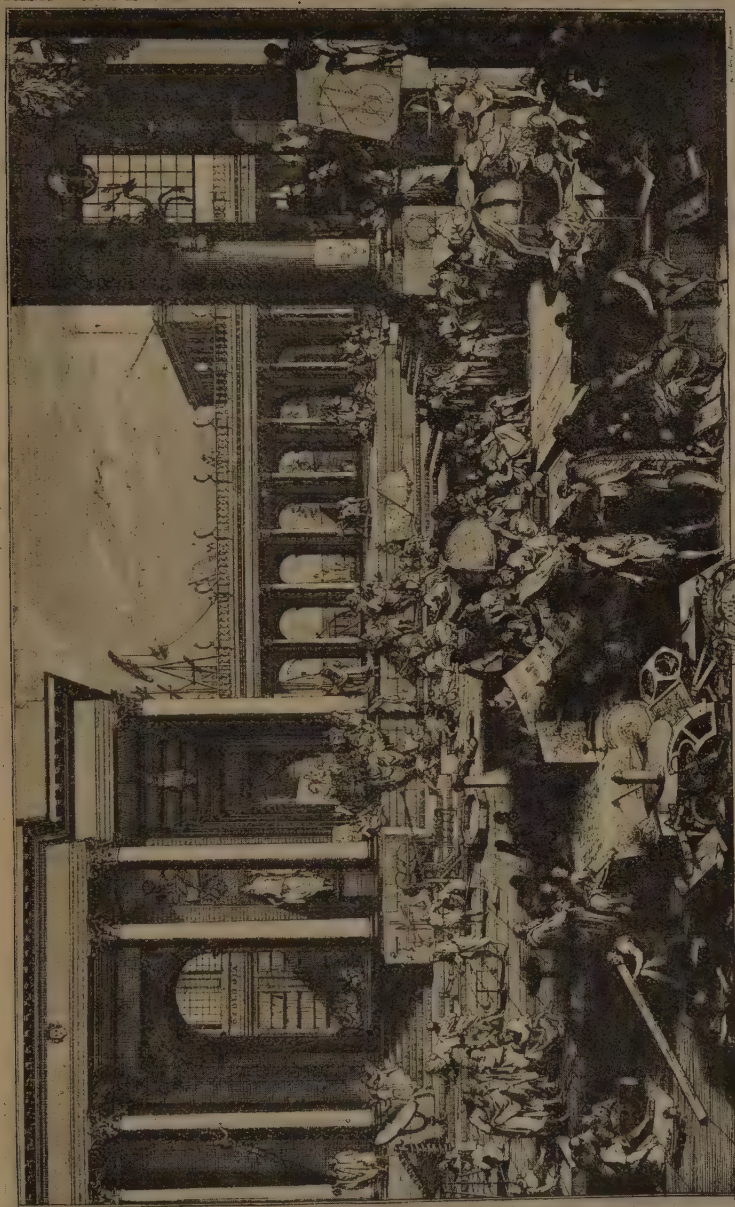
The ideal of all was no longer the amelioration of spiritual man, but social progress. « The Golden Age which the ancients placed so far behind us, lies before. » Progress was realised by means of science, especially applied science.

That was why, in the eighteenth century, every philosopher was also a savant. Rousseau was to be the only one who was exasperated by progress.

**Religion.** — What happened to religion, in the midst of all this positive philosophy? Many reasons explain its weakening, among them these same scientific discoveries which seemed to offer a rational solution for human anxieties. The Deity seems less present in a universe in which phenomena obey well-known laws; and for short-sighted minds, God remains so far away that He is no longer perceived. Self indulgence was concealed under this view, and it was complacently received; for a weakening of religion corresponds also with a weakening of morality. — On another hand, the quarrels and disputes of the seventeenth century, Jansenism, Quietism, the persecution of Protestants were so many causes of the discrediting of religion. Eighteenth century philosophers saw in religion nothing but manifestations of fanaticism, and they made use of arguments which each party had invented to use against the other, in order to refute and defeat them all. Hence those chapters on the *Affaires religieuses* in the *Siècle de Louis XIV*: Voltaire used here the tone of all his contemporaries. Besides, religion which, in the seventeenth century, had been represented by such authoritative and talented characters, was defended in the eighteenth century only by a decried government, a corrupted court, a belated Parliament, boudoir prelates and enraged pamphleteers. Even the best society came to regard religion as one of those state institutions to which it is only decent to submit, to save appearances.

It must be understood that we speak here of the nobility and of the Paris bourgeoisie, and those who formed the governing classes. Let us not imagine that the small provincial nobility and the greater part of the bourgeois had the impiety and the morals of a Duke de Richelieu. Quite the contrary. A religious and moral life, founded upon tradition and faith, was still that of the greater part of the French people. But this majority neither wrote nor spoke; and they ended by feeling the influence of the intellectual and philosophical élite.

**Relations between the Sixteenth and Eighteenth centuries.** — All historians and critics have pointed out relations between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. A stream of bold curiosity and sceptical philosophy, whose source sprang from the Renaissance, seemed, in Sainte-Beuve's phrase, to have disappeared under the earth during the seventeenth century to reappear in the eighteenth. The strict religious and political discipline of Louis XIV's reign had retarded and concealed an intellectual movement, which was plainly perceptible in the free-thinking circles of seventeenth century society, and which developed freely after 1715.



L'ACADEMIE DES SCIENCES,  
 ET DES BEAUX ARTS  
 DE PARIS  
 A Monsieur le Comte de Lezcharbain,  
 Ministre et Secrétaire d'Etat  
 des Sciences, des Arts, des Lettres et de l'Instruction Publique.  
 Paris, le 10 Mars 1804.

THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND FINE-ARTS  
Allegory print by Sébastien Le Clerc (1637-1714).



## IV. — LITERATURE

**Letters, properly so-called.** — The eighteenth century rejected the authority and the imitation of the ancients. But in every literary reaction in France, as Rémusat has so well said, there is only a change of models. Writers no longer imitated the ancients. it is true; but how faithfully they imitated those who had imitated the ancients! Boileau had become the Parnassian legislator; and it was in the *Art poétique* that writers sought the laws of the genres, and not in a new ideal native to the century. Tragedy was to be *racinienne*; in comedy Molière was imitated, until Marivaux. The epic and the ode conformed to Boileau's precepts, as well as descriptive poetry. Nothing could be more striking than the docility, so far as literary forms were concerned, of this independent century: it was the beginning of pseudo-classicism. — And, how inferior! None of these literary works of the eighteenth century give us that powerful impression of originality, beauty and durability we always receive in reading the great classics. Even poetic style became artificial — a sort of dead language, of which we learn the special vocabulary, metaphors and periphrases.

**Originality of the Eighteenth Century.** — Even contemporaries were deceived by these appearances; and the truth is that there was no longer any real literature, or what there was had no importance, however estimable it may have seemed at the time. Tragedy became « a mere play with purpose »; and the value of *Zaire*, of *Mahomet*, like that of *La Veuve du Malabar*, by Lemierre, or *Les Barmécides* by La Harpe, lay in their ideas. For us, they are merely documents showing us the eighteenth century's manner of thinking. Descriptive and lighter poetry lost its æsthetic value; but it shows the psychology and philosophy of the time.

When we turn to prose, the case is better. There were no more conventional framework, forced genres, or artificial language. Both matter and form were new. We wrong works like « *L'Esprit des lois*, *le Siècle de Louis XIV*, *l'Émile*, *l'Histoire Naturelle* when we describe them by the doubtful word « literature. » They were spontaneous and original manifestations of ideas and discoveries in unexplored regions; and it is unpleasant to see them placed, in school manuals, between *Vert-Vert* and *Les Saisons*.

## V. — SCIENCES

Several pages would be necessary to sum up, even briefly, the discoveries made in the eighteenth century. It must suffice to recall: in mathematics, the names of d'Alembert, Laplace, Monge; — in astronomy, Herschell, Clairaut,



Cassini; — in physics and chemistry, Dufay, Nollet, Franklin, Priestly, Lavoisier, Berthollet, Fourcroy; — in natural sciences, Buffon, Daubenton, Lacépède, Linné, Jussieu, Haüy, etc.

The scientific movement was favoured by the interest taken in it by princes and the nobility, especially in countries outside of France. It was fashionable to be a physician or chemist, as formerly to be a wit. Women, through curiosity, also encouraged sciences; and Mme du Châtelet, who translated Newton and sent in memoirs to the Academy of Sciences, was no exception.

Practical knowledge was defined and popularised by the *Encyclopédie*; and by this the mechanical arts profited, and scientific industry developed.

This progress in science also exerted a general influence; it accustomed men's minds to clarity and method; it was a fortunate reaction from utopian philosophy; it transformed history, exegesis, and criticism, though its effects were to be felt especially in the nineteenth century.

## VI. — THE ARTS

Here also we shall have to limit ourselves to a few general indications (1). French art followed, approximately, the movement of the century: **Watteau**, who died in 1721, was the first to be emancipated. For the grandeur and majesty of Lebrun, he substituted a clever and piquant grace; and such art did not exclude naturalness. His successors were painters who exaggerated his merits till they became faults, such as **Lancret**. — At the same time, architecture became supple and ornate, ending in the grotto or rococo style.

The element of eighteenth century originality in art which was, at the same time, the most delicate and the most vexatious, appeared in **Boucher**, a careless designer but a charming colourist. Following him, **Fragonard** painted attractive anecdotes. **Greuze** composed better; though one may prefer his charming single figures to his great literary and moral paintings, which strongly affected Diderot. Realism appeared in the work of **Chardin**, an admirable portrait-painter.

In the last third of the century, however, under scientific, historical and archaeological influences, there was a reaction against genre painting. The most famous representative of « la grande peinture » was **David**, who brought back from Rome a sentiment for antiquity still artificially stiff, but less conventional than Lebrun's.

Sculpture, at first mannered in the work of **Lemoyne**, **Bouchardon**, and **Falconet**, acquired vigour and realism in the hands of **Pigalle** and **Houdon**.

(1) SEE, *l'Histoire générale des beaux-arts*, by M. R. Peyre, Delagrave; and S. Rocheblave's, *Art français au dix-huitième siècle dans ses rapports avec la littérature* (*Hist. de la litt. franç.*, Petit de Julleville, Colin, vol. VI, chap. xv).

The most celebrated architects of the century were **Gabriel**, who built the Military School and the two large « hôtels » on the Place de la Concorde, in Paris, and **Soufflot**, who built the Pantheon. But the taste of the time was better displayed in private architecture, which retained to the end its smart elegance.

## VII. — EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

Cosmopolitanism was never more developed than in the eighteenth century. If you examine the correspondence of any of the great writers, you find them in communication with the kings, princes, great lords, savants and writers of every country. Furthermore, French literature was disseminated throughout all Europe. Great French writers of the seventeenth century became the models of the English, who forgot Shakespeare; of the Germans, until Lessing came; of the Italians, who at that time lacked men of genius. French arts exercised the same influence. Germany and Russia filled their cities with palaces à la Française, and rococo architecture prevailed from Berlin to Rome. Finally, French philosophical ideas penetrated everywhere.

**England.** — But had not foreigners their influence over French literature and philosophy? In literature, not much. Shakespeare doubtless furnished something, but very little, to Voltaire, before he was translated by Letourneur and adapted by Ducis. And we should also recognise the fact that the novels of Richardson inspired French imitations, without forgetting, however, that the novels of Abbé Prévost had preceded Richardson's. But it was above all in the domain of ideas, manners and morals that English influence was felt, and we shall have occasion to revert to this. Montesquieu and Voltaire owed especially to their visits to England their political and social ideas. French Encyclopedists, savants, economists were also inspired by English theories; and society was impregnated with them. Tolerance, civic liberty, the dignity of commerce and industry, public and private comfort were ideas which circulated in France as English importations.

The great names and dates in English literature of the eighteenth century were: **Newton** (died 1727); **Swift** (died 1745), who published in 1704, his *Tale of a Tub*, and in 1726, *Gulliver's Travels*, and by whom Voltaire was inspired in his novels and pamphlets; **Addison** (died 1719), who published in 1711 his *Spectator*, a literary, critical and moral journal, imitated by Marivaux, and in 1713 his tragedy of *Cato*; **Pope** (died 1744), who published in 1718 his *Dunciad*, a satirical poem imitated by Palissot, and in 1732 his *Essay on Man*, which served Voltaire as a model for his philosophical poetry; **Daniel de Foe** (died 1734), who produced *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719; **Richardson** (died 1761), whose novels *Pamela*, *Clarissa Harlowe*, etc., appeared between 1740 and 1750;

philosophers like **David Hume**, **Adam Smith**, **Thomas Reid**; historians like **Gibbon**, etc.

Now, in the eighteenth century, everybody in France knew English, as in the preceding century everybody had known Italian.

**Germany.** — In Germany, where everyone spoke French, we must note the



<sup>a</sup> Hindemarek d

THE FIRST EXHIBITION OF PAINTING

*Installed in the large gallery of the Louvre, in 1699.*

first masterpieces of a literature which was to acquire great brilliance and to exercise also a strong influence upon France.

**Leibniz** (died in 1716) published his *Théodicée* in French in 1710, and his *Monadologie* appeared after his death in 1720; **Gottsched** (died 1766) translated Racine's tragedies, and soon engaged in the fight against Lessing; **Klopstock** (died 1803) published his *Messias* from 1748-1773; **Lessing** (died 1781) wrote his *Laocoon* in 1763, and in 1767 his *Dramaturgie*; later he published his plays, chief among which was *Nathan der Weiss*, 1779; and, under the influence of Diderot, he rejuvenated the German drama; but **Goethe** had already produced his *Goetz von Berlichingen* in 1773, and published *Werther* in 1774, which was translated into French in 1776 and met with great success; *Egmont* was written in 1788, *Iphigenie* in 1789, *Wilhelm Meister* in 1796, *Hermann und Dorothea* in 1798; **Schiller** published *Die Räuber* in 1780, *Die Verschwörung Fieschi* in 1784, *Die Geschichte des Dreissigjährigen Krieges*, in 1791, *Wallenstein* in 1799. We should also mention **Voss**, **Wieland**; the great archaologist and art critic

**Winckelmann** (died 1768), and the philosophers, **Herder** (died 1803), and **Kant** (died 1804), etc.

**Italy** had the historian **Vico** (died 1744); **Metastasio** (died 1782), whose opera libretti are masterpieces of sensibility and pathos; **Goldoni** (died 1793), who rejuvenated Italian comedy by imitating Molière; **Alfieri** (died 1803), author of tragedies which are full of strong and eloquent situations; **Beccaria** (died 1794), whose *Traité des délits et des peines* was enthusiastically welcomed by philosophers.

As for Spain, she imitated the French, and produced no original work.



PAGE ORNAMENT

Designed by Bernard Picart (1673-1733) and engraved by P. Yver (1740).





ALLEGORIC FRIEZE  
From the print by J.-Ph. Le Bas.

## CHAPTER II.

### TRANSITION.

#### FONTENELLE. — BAYLE. — THE FIRST SALONS.

##### SUMMARY

1° FONTENELLE (1657-1757) was at first only a mediocre poet and a professional wit. Later he popularised science admirably, in his *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* and especially in his *Eloges des savants*. Discreetly sceptical, he was a forerunner of Voltaire.

2° BAYLE (1647-1706) was the precursor of the encyclopedists. In his *Dictionnaire* (1697) he brought traditions and beliefs into question, and opposed authority.

3° The first SALONS of the century were: the Court of Sceaux, where the Duchess du Maine assembled men of letters, savants, and all polite society. The habitués of this salon willingly listened to scientific conferences. Mlle De-launay has left us piquant *Mémoires* on this court;—Mme de Lambert received, from 1710 to 1733, the most illustrious writers and the nobility; her salon was a centre of *préciosité* and aristocratic refinement; Mme de Tencin was of a bolder character, and philosophy began to make its way into her salon.

## I. — FONTENELLE (1657-1757).



DECORATED LETTER  
by Sébastien Leclerc (1637-1714).

**Biography.** — Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle, born in Rouen in 1657, nephew of the Corneilles through his mother, studied, as they had done, at the Jesuit college of his native city, and became a lawyer. But he left the bar to go to Paris to Thomas Corneille, who encouraged his literary vocation. His beginnings were not brilliant. His tragedy *Aspar* (1680) fell flat, and so did several other plays in the same genre (4). For the Opera he wrote a *Psyché*, a *Lavinie*, etc. These were followed by his *Dialogues des Morts* (1683) and his *Poésies pastorales* (1688), and in them all Fontenelle seemed mediocre and affected. His *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (1686) had already demonstrated that he possessed an intelligent and tactful gift for popularizing science.

Fontenelle frequented fashionable salons, where he was sought after for the ease and brilliance of his conversation. He was the Cydias portrayed by La Bruyère, he was a professional wit, he wrote verses on every sort of subject. "He uttered, with much gravity, his over-refined thoughts and his sophisticated arguments... He was part pedant and part *précieux*." This portrait is very well, but it is exaggerated. The quarrel of the ancients and moderns was then at its height, and Fontenelle was above all guilty, in La Bruyère's eyes, of being a modern. On his side, Fontenelle, in *Le Mercure*, did not spare the author of *Les Caractères*, who replied sharply in the Preface to his *Discours à l'Académie*.

Finally, the true Fontenelle appeared when, as perpetual secretary of the Academy of Sciences, he wrote the *Eloges des Académiciens* (1708-1719). — From this time, though he continued to be a charming conversationalist in the salons of Mme de Lambert and Mme de Tencin, he commanded philosophical influence. His disposition was pleasing and gentle. He was tactful with everybody, even with himself. His motto was "Everything is possible, and everybody is right." But his fault was lack of sensibility; and Mme de Tencin said to him, pointing to his heart, "It is only brains that you have there." He reached an extreme and lucid old age, and died a centenarian in 1757.

**His Scientific Works.** — In his *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*, Fontenelle imagines that, finding himself at the country-house of the marquise de

(4) See Racine's epigram on the *origine des sifflets* (*Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 561.)

G..., he explains to this lady the astral system, and the theories concerning inhabited planets. Every evening they walk in the park; the night is magnificent; the marquise has an inquiring mind, and Fontenelle asks nothing better than to converse. The First Evening, he explains to the marquise that "the earth is a planet, which turns around the sun"; the Second Evening, that "the moon is inhabited;" the Third Evening, that "the other planets are also inhabited;" the Fourth Evening he recounts "the peculiarities of the worlds, Venus, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn"; the Fifth Evening "that the fixed stars are all suns, each one lighting a world"; and finally, the Sixth Evening is devoted to "the most recent discoveries which have been made in the heavens."—It is always a disadvantage to write of such subjects in a witty manner; and the first pages give the impression of an author who is trying to be witty about the astronomical laws. But the farther we advance in the book, the more serious it becomes. We perceive that the author's mental brilliance is not meant to conceal lack of knowledge of his subject, but to ornament science (1).

The *Éloges des académiciens* is more frankly serious. Still Fontenelle addresses himself to society, and his object is to explain to those possessing no special scientific instruction the works of Tournefort, Leibnitz, Newton, Du Fay, Montmort, de Cassini, etc. (2). Fontenelle is always clear and exact, and knows how



FONTENELLE

From the portrait painted by Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659-1743) and engraved by Michel Dessier.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 278.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 280.

to analyse physical, botanical, surgical works, etc. And he knew how to inspire admiration and love for science.

Fontenelle was therefore an innovator, in the sense that he added a new domain to literature. What Descartes had done for philosophy, Pascal for theology, what Montesquieu was to do for politics, Fontenelle, along with Buffon, did for the sciences. The readers of *L'Histoire naturelle* and the *Époques de la nature* were prepared for those works by the author of the *Entretiens* and the *Éloges*.

**His Philosophy.** — But Fontenelle belonged more to the eighteenth century because of his scepticism, and because, as an adversary of the Ancients and partisan of the Moderns, he contributed slowly but powerfully to the development of the notion of progress.<sup>1</sup> In his *Dialogues*, in his *Histoire des oracles* (1), in his *Digression sur les anciens et sur les modernes*, he appears as a true precursor. He was too prudent to assume the pugnacious or impertinent tone of Voltaire; but, by his insinuations, he announced the latter. He already knew, like the author of the *Dictionnaire philosophique* and of *Candide*, how to tell an oriental story, without any apparent relation — for the naive reader — with our own beliefs and manners, but from which the shrewd knew how to draw conclusions. And he put, finally, the question of the ancients, as the Encyclopedists were to do. It was Fontenelle who wrote, in 1688, "A good mind is composed, so to speak, of all the minds of the preceding centuries; it is but one mind which has been cultivated during all that time. This mind has now reached that virile age when it can reason with more power and more light than ever before. The man who possesses this mind will never know old age: men will never degenerate, and the healthy ideas of all right minds, succeeding each other, will always accumulate." He knew, however, how to draw distinctions between the different objects of progress, as Madame de Staël did later. "In order", he says "that the moderns may always improve upon the ancients, things must be of such a nature as to permit it. As to eloquence and poetry, the subject of the chief difficulties between the ancients and moderns, though they are not in themselves very important, I believe that the ancients have attained perfection in them. Then let us be satisfied to say that they cannot be surpassed, but not that they cannot be equalled (2)." These are very intelligent statements, so sensible that to us they seem banal; yet it was because he dared to speak thus that Fontenelle was reviled and ridiculed by the defenders of the ancients. — As a philosopher, it was in the name of progress that Fontenelle believed less and less in authority, and more and more in reason.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 635.—See the edition of *L'Histoire des Oracles*, published by M. L. MAIGRON. Cornély, 1908 (*Société des textes français modernes*).

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 636.



## II. — BAYLE. — LA MOTTE-HOUDARD. — ABBÉ DE SAINT-PIERRE

**PIERRE BAYLE** (1647-1706). — Born of a Protestant family, converted to Catholicism, later returning to the Protestant belief, Bayle left France in 1670, became a tutor, and in time a professor of philosophy and history at Rotterdam. There, in that very Holland which was so liberal, he was persecuted, and the Protestant minister, Jurieu, deprived him of his chair in 1693. He then gave himself up entirely to his own work, and completed the publication of his *Dictionnaire* in 1697.

His chief works are : *Pensées sur les comètes* (1682), — *Nouvelles de la république des lettres* (1684-1687). — *La France toute catholique sous Louis le Grand* (1685), — *Avis aux réfugiés* (1690), — *Dictionnaire historique et philosophique* (1696-1697).

First of all, Bayle was a scholar and critic who seemed to belong less to the seventeenth century than near its close, or even to the approaching eighteenth century, than to the Renaissance. One would say he was a contemporary of Erasmus or of Henri Estienne, as he had the same passion for details and the same scorn of style. As a critic, Bayle should be studied in his *Nouvelles de la république des lettres*, which he founded as a rival to the *Journal des savants* (1); and it was the first of the *Revue*s. In his *Dictionnaire*, he is still a literary critic, like Sainte-Beuve, when he gathers and discusses the slightest biographical and bibliographical details, and prepares documents for a natural history of the intelligence. Nevertheless, his criticism has no fixed principles beyond an always wideawake and free curiosity, and it rejoins his philosophy : he energetically demolishes legends, or discusses, from the standpoint of facts, traditional admiration.

However, Bayle's work is chiefly philosophical. His *Dictionnaire*, which he claimed to have undertaken merely to fill the gaps left by previous dictionaries, gave him an opportunity to bring up again all the moral, theological and exegetical questions.

He gathered and spread all the free-thinking disseminated since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well as the objections made to it, and collected the scattered jests in Henri Estienne, Montaigne, Charron, Guy Patin, La Motte Le Vayer, Gassendi, etc. He did not directly attack Christianity ; but by a clever system of references from one article to another — a system which was used later in the *Encyclopédie* — he ruined little by little all dogma and authority. He applied everywhere the historical method, accepting nothing which was not founded on a document or an authentic fact ; and in this respect he may be

(1) The *Journal des Savants* had been founded in 1655 by Denis de Sallo, Counsellor to the *Parlement* of Paris. It announced new books, published biographies of deceased savants, as well as discoveries, experiments, observations, etc. (Cf. VOLTAIRE, *Siècle de Louis XIV*, list of French writers, *Sallo* and *Bayle*).

considered as a forerunner of modern criticism in its most serious aspect. But as Emile Faguet has truly observed, " Bayle is given to irreverent jesting and to burlesquing metaphysics and religions, which belongs entirely to the eighteenth century". If we add to this tendency his lack of a sense of propriety and his taste for cynical detail, we shall realise in what manner his influence was unfortunate.

In reality, he had neither theory, design nor object. He had a mordant critical intelligence which attacked everything more or less, and his caustic curiosity searched all philosophy; yet he would doubtless have protested against the new rationalistic intolerance which his most faithful disciples were going to deduce from his scepticism.

**LA MOTTE-HOUDARD** (1672-1731) should be mentioned among the precursors of the philosophical and critical eighteenth century on account of the share he took in the quarrel of the ancients and moderns. — As an author of tragedies, he had a great " succès de larmes " with his *Inès de Castro* (1723). As a critic, he composed several *Discours* (upon *L'Églogue*, *La Fable*, *La Tragédie*, *L'Ode*, etc.), in which paradoxes are mingled with a few true ideas. He is best known for having abridged Homer's *Iliad* into twelve cantos, after the translation by Mme Dacier, for he did not know Greek. And though he had written much against poetry, he wrote this abridgement. — In 1714, he corresponded with Fénelon about the ancients, a correspondence which was extremely courteous, but not without reciprocal irony.

**ABBÉ DE SAINT-PIERRE** (1658-1743), a man of exquisite gentleness but very bold in his political and economic ideas, was expelled from the Academy in 1718 for having severely judged Louis XIV. His most famous work is the *Projet de paix perpétuelle* (1713-1717), but he wrote numerous others of the same kind, his object being only public utility, in which he was the precursor of our most profound modern economists. The invention of the word " bienfaisance " is attributed to him, and it characterises his mind as well as his works.

### III. — THE FIRST SALONS

The three most famous salons, during the first half of the eighteenth century, were the Court of Sceaux, the salon of Mme de Lambert and that of Mme de Tencin.

**THE COURT OF SCEAUX AND THE DUCHESS DU MAINE.** — The Duchess du Maine, grand-daughter of the Grand Condé, was a slender, lively and mischievous person, who had frankly, and with great freedom, resolved to amuse herself. In 1699, when Versailles had become dull, she set up a new court at Sceaux, where there were nothing but diversions, *fêtes champêtres*, and *fêtes*

nocturnes, reading of poetry, representations of tragedies and comedies, and conversation on any subject from astronomy to politics. The "Voiture" of this court was for a long time Malézieu, who had been tutor to the Duke de Maine and had taught mathematics to the Duke de Bourgogne. Malézieu was a scientist and wit, a sort of less reserved Fontenelle, capable of giving a lecture on astronomy or physics, of rhyming a song, or improvising a diversion. He was a member both of the Academy of Sciences and of the French Academy.

All the literary world was received at Sceaux : Voltaire in his youth, and



A CARD TABLE UNDER THE REGENCE  
From a print by Sébastien Le Clerc (1637-1714).

later when he staid with Mme du Châtelet ; Fontenelle was one of the *habitués*, as were also the poets Chaulieu and La Fare, La Motte, Abbé Genest, celebrated for his tragedies and also for his nose à la Cyrano, Abbé de Polignac, the author of the *Anti-Lucretius*, etc.

A great storm dispersed this frivolous and witty court. Cellamare's conspiracy led to the arrest of the Duchess, who remained for more than a year in the Bastille. But scarcely had she been released from prison than the Duchess resumed her former life, and Sceaux became once more the rendez-vous of the wits. She had at that time, as her "femme de chambre" Mlle **Delaunay** (whom she married later to the Baron de Staal, captain in the Swiss Guards), and who has left us *Mémoires* which are singularly piquant in their elegant simplicity. Mlle Delaunay, had she had a less noble heart, could have played the same part with the Duchess du Maine as Mlle de Lespinasse with Mme du Defland

and form a rival salon; for she was a great attraction for the visitor at Sceaux and her clear intelligence, true heart, and delicate conversation fascinated much more than the sterile activity of her mistress. But she contented herself with remaining in her own rank and writing her Memoirs, which should be read (1).

**LA MARQUISE DE LAMBERT (1647-1733).** — It was about 1690 that



PORTRAIT OF MADAME DE LAMBERT  
From the print by Desrochers.

Mme de Lambert opened her salon, and from 1710-1733 it became chiefly literary. The company there was less mixed and more serious than that of the Court of Sceaux; but Mme de Lambert, like Mme Geoffrin later, established categories of her guests. Wednesday was reserved for "people of quality"; Tuesday for literary people. The two classes ended by being more or less commingled. There were no frivolous entertainments in this salon; the guests talked or read. *Préciosité* reappeared there along with a certain decency of language and delicacy of conversation which was the necessary reaction against the freedom or licence of the Regency. On the other hand, her salon was modern; the ancients were the subject of witty jests, and the guests were frankly pre-

pared for a new literature. The chief *habitués* were La Motte, Fontenelle, the Marquis d'Argenson, Abbé de Saint-Pierre, Montesquieu, Marivaux, Président Hénault, and Mlle Delaunay (2).

Mme de Lambert — in this respect less of a *grande dame* than Mme de Rambouillet — did not resist the temptation to read her own works to her guests. She had printed in 1726 and 1728 her *Avis d'une mère à son fils* and her *Avis d'une mère à sa fille*, and different treatises (*L'Amitié, La Vieillesse*), literary por-

(1) Mme de Staël-Delaunay died in 1750; her *Mémoires* were printed in 1755

(2) Mme de Lambert's hôtel was in the rue Richelieu, at the corner of the rue Colbert.



traits, discours, etc. which she had composed for her salon. Her first two works have a real pedagogical and moral value, and have been continually reprinted. "She wrote skilfully," says M. L. Brunel, "with a somewhat weak grace and a touch of affectation. Was it from La Motte and Fontenelle that she could have learned to avoid these (1)?"

**MME DE TENCIN** (1681-1749). — It was in 1726 that Mme de Tencin began to receive in her hôtel in the rue Saint-Honoré; but this salon did not reach the height of its brilliance until after the death of Mme de Lambert (1733). Its tone was freer, and its society more numerous and more mixed. It was no longer *préciosité* which reigned there, but philosophy. The hostess was more familiar and more good-natured, and foretold the bourgeoisie Mme Geoffrin. At Mme de Tencin's one met Fontenelle, Marivaux, Montesquieu, La Motte, Duclos, d'Argental, Marmontel, Helvétius, and financiers and foreigners.

Mme de Tencin herself wrote novels: *Le Comte de Comminges* and *Le Siège de Calais*, which are not without merit, and were attributed to her nephew Pont-de-Veyle.

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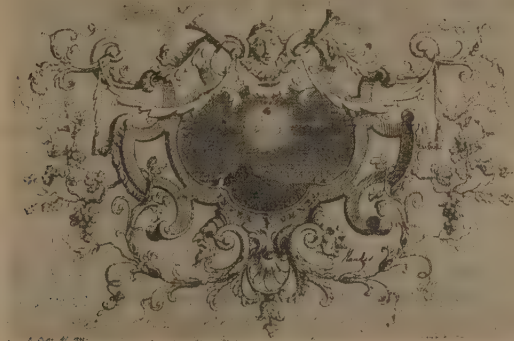
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PAGE ORNAMENT

Designed and engraved by Bernard Picart (1673-1733)



CHINA MAN WORSHIPPING A BOUDDHA  
Decorative frieze by Gravelot.

## CHAPTER III.

### MONTESQUIEU (1689-1755).

#### SUMMARY

1° **MONTESQUIEU** (1689-1755) was an aristocrat, a magistrate connected with the institutions of his country, a reformer, a satirical writer and a wit.

2° *Les Lettres Persanes* (1721) is a satire, with a large background, at once witty and profound, of society and its institutions. We should note the rather insipid plot; the passages in which Montesquieu criticises, in La Bruyère's way the manners, and absurdities of his time; the chapters in which he handles questions of politics or religion, and by which he foretells *L'Esprit des lois*.

3° *Les Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur et de la décadence des Romains* (1734) are the result of the author's profound research in Roman history. Montesquieu studied Rome's decadence rather than its grandeur, and established political rather than moral causes for it. The style of this work is serious and truly Roman.

4° *L'Esprit des lois* (1748) is a positive study, from documents, of the relations existing between different system of legislation and the people living under them. Montesquieu starts from facts, and seeks to explain them, and in this respect differs from all abstract theorists.—This masterpiece is written too wittily : Mme du Deffand accused the author of trying to show “de l'esprit sur les Lois.



DECORATED LETTER

by Sébastien Leclerc (1637-1714)

**igraphy.** — Charles de Secondat, Baron de la Brède et de Montesquieu, was born in the château de la Brède, near Bordeaux, on January 18, 1689. His family belonged to the old nobility, and though he was always proud of it, it was he, himself, who added its most imperishable titles to fame. When he had completed his studies with the *Oratoriens*, at Juilly, his friends placed in his hands some law-books the signifi-  
cance which he tried to see. In 1714 he was appointed counsellor to the Bordeaux *Parlement*, and in 1716 *président à mortier*. As a magistrate he was precise and laborious, if unconvinced. Already he sought occupation outside of, or in relation with, his functions, and, for lack of anything better, he be-

came a very assiduous member of the Bordeaux Academy of Sciences, to which he contributed memoirs on questions of physics, echoes, gravity, the transparency of bodies, etc. Meanwhile, he was preparing his first work. "I have a mania for writing books", he said, "and for being ashamed of them after I have done." The *Lettres Persanes* appeared anonymously in 1724, and had an astounding success. But Montesquieu was already meditating a more serious work. He went to Paris, sold his office of President, frequented the salons and clubs for a while, and was received at the French Academy in 1727.

From 1728 to 1731, Montesquieu travelled. He wished to collect documents and especially observations for *L'Esprit des Loix*. Furthermore, he was as curious as his compatriot, Montaigne, and, like the author of the *Essais*, he was much less fascinated by the beauties of nature than by manners and institutions. He first went to Vienna, where he talked with Prince Eugène, then to Venice, where he questioned the financier Law on his celebrated and unfortunate speculations. He stopped at Milan, Turin, Florence (1), Rome and Naples. He then turned northwards, followed the route from Verona to Innsbruck which Montaigne had travelled from Innsbruck to Verona, returned by the Rhine and reached Holland. From this country he went to England on Lord Chesterfield's yacht, and there he remained two years. At London he observed the working of that constitution which is both monarchical and democratic, and which remained his ideal. We may remark, here, how much the greatest Frenchmen of the eighteenth century owed to England; after Montesquieu, Voltaire and Buffon profited by a knowledge of England; only J.-J. Rousseau, while there, remained as truculent as usual, and returned without having either forgotten or learned anything.

After his return to France, Montesquieu shut himself up in his château to

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 232.

put his notes and impressions in order. In 1734, he produced his *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur et de la décadence des Romains*, an important part of *L'Esprit des lois*. The work was received with favour. Montesquieu went often to Paris, to divert himself after his immense labours at La Brède, and was seen in the chief salons, at Mme du Deffand's, Mme Geoffrin's and Mme de Tencin's. But he always returned more devoted than before to his laborious country life. *L'Esprit des lois* appeared in 1748. The work had a brilliant success, and was translated into every language.

Exhausted by this enormous effort, Montesquieu wrote nothing more except the *Défense de l'Esprit des lois*, in 1750. He triumphed over all opposition and all his adversaries. He was in Paris when he died in February, 1755, at the age of sixty-six.

**Character.** — His character was composed of rather contradictory elements (1). He was an aristocrat closely attached to the privileges of the nobility, and devoting the last two books of his *Esprit des lois* to research into feudal law, so as to establish in a way the legitimacy of his own titles: a conscientious magistrate, careful that "the laws should not be touched but by a trembling hand", and defending the judicial organisation of his country; a liberal and bold mind, very clear as to the abuses of the existing regime, and desirous that the French should borrow a part of their constitution from English institutions; a satirist even more bitter than Voltaire; a painter of manners as vivid as La Bruyère; a wit who could not resist making a clever remark to surprise or pique his reader, approaching the gravest subject by its lighter side—in a word, as Voltaire said, "playing the joker".

Morally, he showed the same contrasts: with little sensibility, "having never had a grief that an hour's reading would not dissipate",—he could protest with the most emotional eloquence against slavery or torture, and prove himself generous and charitable, though with reserved benevolence. We shall also find all these contrasts in his works and his style.

**Les Lettres persanes** (1721).—Almost all great reformers, before publishing what might be called their *positive* works, have begun by decrying and attacking abuses, as the negative part of their task.

Montesquieu was first struck by the fact that there was "something rotten in the kingdom of France." Everybody yielded to it, through laziness or interest. Montesquieu's superior mind clearly perceived the defects and vices, and perhaps already the remedies. He differs from moralists like La Bruyère in being also, and preeminently, a politician, and in believing that it is not only manners and morals which are responsible for social corruption, but also institutions: in this respect he belongs truly to the eighteenth century, and his successors only resumed and exaggerated his thesis.

But Montesquieu, the moralist and politician, knew the Paris salons and the taste of the people who read books, and he realised that a purely moral work had no chance of

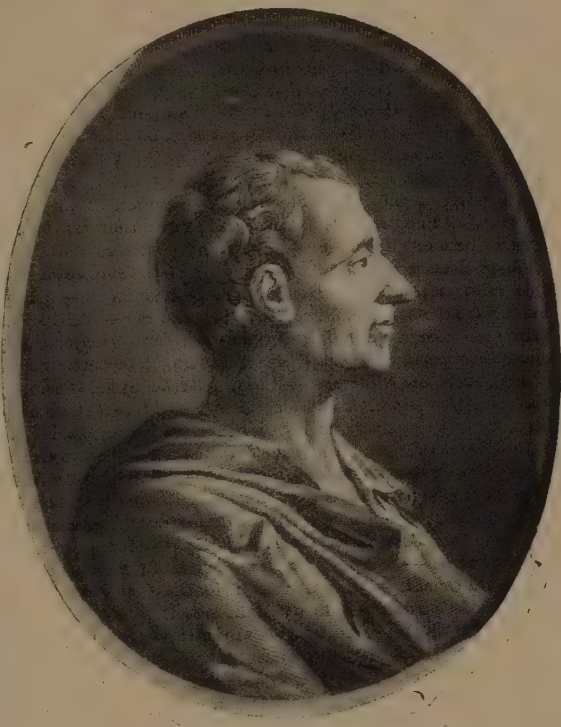
(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 644.



success. La Bruyère had been obliged to make his own book piquant and amusing, and since then society had grown still more frivolous and difficult to satisfy. So Montesquieu tried to present in a fascinating form his case against a society which before all else had to be amused. In 1707, Dufresny, celebrated chiefly for his comedies, had published *Les Amusements sérieux et comiques d'un Siamois*. In this book, he supposes that a Siamese, who has come to Paris, naively analyses for his countrymen what he has seen and heard. The scope of such a work was wide, and though apparently fiction, it permitted boldness. Montesquieu adopted this idea. His characters are two Persians Rica and Usbeck, who visit Europe and write home to their friends.

It was from Chardin's *Journal*, which appeared in 1711, that Montesquieu drew some Persian local colour; and to connect the *Lettres* together, and oblige readers to follow them to the end, he invented a plot based on harem life which lent interest to the correspondence and piqued curiosity.

There are, then, several elements in the *Lettres persanes*: 1° The plot, which it is enough merely to indicate; a satire on the absurdities of society and morals, in which occur excellent portraits in La Bruyère's manner; the coquetry of women (Lettre XXVI), the theatre (XXVIII), Parisian chit-chat (XXX), the cafés (XXXVI), the alchemist (XLV), the financier, the director of conscience, the starving poet, the retired officer (XLVIII), the rivalry between women of different ages (LII), gaming (LVI), the ignorant magistrate (LXVIII), the positive man (LXXII) etc. This is the amusing part of the *Lettres persanes*, in which Montesquieu is both an excellent painter of life and a satirist who is clear-sighted to the point of being malign; 3° Finally, there is a certain number of more serious letters, not without persiflage, but the object of which is a calm discussion of political, religious and literary questions: the story of the Troglodytes (XI, XII, XIII, XIV), the King of France (XXIV, XXXVII), the Pope (XXIX), theological disputes (XLVI), metaphysics (LXIX), suicide (LXXVI), different forms of government (LXXX), glory (LXXXIX-XC), justice (XCV), the Romans (CXV), divorce (CXVI, CXVII), the colonies (CXXI), the laws (CXXIX), the library of a convent,



PORTRAIT OF MONTESQUIEU

From the print engraved by Henriquez.

and in this connection judgments on the literary genres (CXXXIII and following), etc. — Too many references would be necessary to indicate the profundity of the *Lettres persanes*. The author of the *Considérations* and of the *Esprit des lois* is continuously foretold in them. And when we have read with admiration a number of serious pages, we are extremely surprised to come again upon the insipid plot in which Montesquieu himself seems to have felt more pleasure than was proper (1).

**Les Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur et de la décadence des Romains** (1734).—This is Montesquieu's truly classic work.—In the *Lettres persanes* we find many allusions to the Romans, the author seeming to revert to them by predilection. He had formerly read, before the Academy of Bordeaux in 1716, a *Dissertation sur la politique des Romains dans la religion*; and this is the more important to remember because in *Considérations* Montesquieu was absolutely to neglect Roman religion. After the *Lettres persanes*, he had composed in 1722 the *Dialogue de Sylla et d'Eucrate*, which he only read in a salon, and did not publish until 1745.

Following is the plan of the *Considérations*: Chap. I: *Commencement de Rome. Ses guerres*. — Chap. II: *De l'art de la guerre chez les Romains*. — Chap. III: *Comment les Romains purent s'agrandir*. — Chap. IV: *Des Gaulois. De Pyrrhus. Parallèle de Carthage et de Rome. Guerre d'Annibal*. — Chap. V: *De l'état de la Grèce, de la Macédoine, de la Syrie et de l'Égypte, après l'abaissement des Carthaginois*. — Chap. VI: *De la conduite que les Romains tinrent pour soumettre tous les peuples*. — Chap. VII: *Comment Mithridate put leur résister*. — Chap. VIII: *Des divisions qui furent toujours dans la ville*. — Chap. IX: *Deux causes de la perte de Rome* (The greatness of the empire and of the city). — Chap. X: *De la corruption des Romains*. — Chap. XI: *De Sylla. De Pompée et de César*. — Chap. XII: *De l'état de Rome après la mort de César*. — Chap. XIII: *Auguste*. — Chap. XIV: *Tibère*. — Chap. XV: *Des empereurs depuis Caius Caligula jusqu'à Antonin*. — Chap. XVI: *De l'état de l'empire depuis Antonin jusqu'à Probus*. — Chap. XVII: *Changement dans l'État* (Division of the State between two emperors). — Chap. XVIII: *Nouvelles maximes prises par les Romains* (tribute paid to the barbarians; loss of the national militia; financial exactions). — Chap. XIX: *Grandeur d'Attila. Cause de l'établissement des Barbares. Raisons pourquoi l'Empire d'Occident fut le premier abattu*. — Chap. XX: *Des conquêtes de Justinien. De son gouvernement*. — Chap. XXI: *Désordres de l'Empire d'Orient*. — Chap. XXII: *Faiblesse de l'Empire d'Orient*. — Chap. XXIII: *Raison de la durée de l'Empire d'Orient. Sa destruction* (Taking of Constantinople by Mahomet II, 1453).

How did Montesquieu find documents for his *Considérations*? He had read, with pen in hand, all the great historians of antiquity: Sallust, Caesar, Livy, Florus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Polybius, Plutarch, Dyonysius of Halicarnassus, Diodorus of Sicily, Josephus, etc. Respecting the decadence, he quotes from: Suidas, Justinian, Nicetas, Lactantius, Saint Augustin, etc. He also consulted Machiavel (*Discours sur la première Décade de Tite Live*), Saint-Evremond (*Réflexions sur les divers génies du peuple romain*), and Bossuet (*Histoire universelle*, 3 parties, chap. VI et VII). He studied Roman History from its beginnings, and read all that his predecessors had to say on the subject; and for this he deserves praise, when we consider the extent of such reading. It must be added, however, that Montesquieu had neither the critical nor the scientific spirit as we understand it to-day. He never doubts the scientific accuracy of any text or testimony; and with respect to certain legends, it may be said that he has shown himself to be more credulous than antiquity was itself. He does not discuss Rome's origin, and accepts with docility all that Livy reports concerning the kings, as well as biased judgments on the emperors; above all he does not discriminate between the different moments in the history of Roman manners and morals (2). It should be added that Montesquieu

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 284; 2nd cycle, p. 646.

(2) As to Montesquieu's credulity, see *Introduction* to Person's edition (Garnier).

did not even suspect what may be drawn from the "auxiliary sciences of history," such as archæology, epigraphics, numismatics, etc. Nor must it be said that this was a defect of his time; for, only a few years later, President de Brosses, searching Italy for documents for his *Sallust*, wrote from 1739-1740 letters which reveal the most curious and fruitful research.

Let us not then ask of Montesquieu more than he has wished to give us, viz, a study in political philosophy. In spite of his errors he found, like Bossuet and Corneille, the essence of the Roman spirit.—Bossuet, to whom he is often compared (1), had studied Roman grandeur rather than its decadence, and searched out moral rather than political causes.

Montesquieu, out of twenty-three chapters, devotes eight to the grandeur and fifteen to the decadence of Rome. For Montesquieu, the essential causes of Rome's grandeur were love of liberty and military discipline (I-III), and the politics of the Senate (IV-VII); — the causes of decadence were not for him, as for Bossuet, the loss of moral and civic virtues, but chiefly the extent of the Empire, the distances to which troops had to be sent, knowing no longer any body except their general (IX), and finally, inequality of fortunes. Montesquieu prolongs his study of Rome's decadence till the fall of the Eastern Empire.



VIEW OF THE CASTLE OF LA BRÈDE

From a reading of this work we deduce the following, philosophy: "It is not chance which rules the world." Men are, in divers degrees, responsible for events; the latter never have an individual but always a relative importance; they are connected with and impose conditions upon, one another. And this is so true, that Montesquieu not only explains what might at first sight seem to us accidental and fortuitous in Roman history, but from this history, whose human mechanism he has understood, he draws general and profound observations which are so many predictions (i. e., caesarism, and the Oriental question).

**L'Esprit des lois** (1748).—This work consists of thirty-one books, each one subdivided into fifteen to twenty chapters.—The word "Esprit" means intimate sense, universal.—Laws are defined as "Les rapports nécessaires qui dérivent de la nature des choses." What does a "rapport" mean? The explanation of this formula alone will prove the originality and depth of Montesquieu. Before him, all those who had written about the laws—Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Thomas Aquinas, Bossuet, and generally all the historians of laws (except perhaps Bodin)—began with abstract, metaphysical and moral defin-

(1) See especially NISARD, *Littérature française*, vol. IV, chap. VII.

itions; they built up an ideal legislation, and criticised, from the standpoint of their own principles, all existing legislation. Montesquieu's method is, on the contrary, experimental. "I first examined men," he says in his Preface, "believing that, in this infinite diversity of laws and morals, they were not altogether led by their fancies... I have not deduced a principle from my own prejudices, but from the nature of things." The diversity of legislation, which scandalised theorists, seemed to him necessary and useful: "Laws should be so essentially proper to the people for whom they have been made, that it is very doubtful if the laws of one nation could serve for another." (Book I, ap. III). "What then are these essential, natural elements whose relation determines the laws? First, laws should be related to the nature and the principle of the government; then, they should be made with respect to "the physical conditions of the country, to an icy, a burning or a temperate climate; to the quality of the land, its situation, its extent; to the kind of life the people lead, whether agriculturists, hunters or shepherds; they should be made with respect to the degree of liberty allowed by the constitution, to the religion of the inhabitants, their inclinations, their wealth, number, commerce, manners... The laws should be considered in all these relations... I shall examine all these relations, as their assemblage is in reality what is called "l'esprit des lois." (Book I, chap. III) (1).

In Book II, Montesquieu defines the three kinds of government: the republican, which can only subsist by integrity (that is sincere devotion to the institutions); the monarchical, founded upon honour (that is to say, chivalric loyalty to the king); and the despotic government, founded on fear (the despot only being obeyed through fear of punishment). Books IV, V, VI, VII and VIII are devoted to a study of the laws in their relation to governments as thus defined.—Books IX and X: Of laws in their relation with force whether defensive or offensive. Here Montesquieu gives his opinion on war, conquerors, etc.—Book XI is of capital importance, and is entitled, «On the laws on which political liberties are founded.» Here Montesquieu studies the English constitution with evident sympathy. The "Constitutionalists" of the Revolution were inspired by this.—Book XII: the political liberty of the citizen.—Book XIII, public revenues.—Book XIV: Climate.—Books XV, XVI and XVII: Slavery (in chapter V of Book XV is Montesquieu's celebrated protest against negro slavery, which is a model of eloquent irony (2)).—Book XVIII: The land.—Book XIX: Manners and Customs.—Books XX and XXI: Commerce.—Book XXII: Currency.—Book XXIII: The number of inhabitants.—Books XXIV to XXVI: Religion.—Book XXVII: Roman laws.—Book XXVIII: French civil law.—Book XXIX: Manner of formulating the laws.—Books XXX and XXXI: Feudal laws of the Franks (3).

In each of these books Montesquieu reviews the different codes, and tries to explain such laws as seem strange to us. In this way he studies Roman slavery and, without approving it, finds it consistent with their government and their morals; but he considers slavery an anomaly in governments whose system is founded upon honour and virtue, and especially inconsistent with Christian morality.—As in the *Lettres persanes*, he makes use of allusions, criticising French laws à propos of Chinese laws, and suddenly introducing piquant comparisons.—He brings methods of critical discussion to bear upon history and the examination of religions; and while proclaiming the moral and social superiority of Christianity, he explains why such and such a nation, in such and such a climate, must change the elements of its political existence and of its morals in order to become logically Christian.

All these observations Montesquieu based upon an immense number of documents.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 652.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 639.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 286.



We have only to run through the *Esprit des lois*, and note the references to original texts, to appreciate the extent of the author's labours.

**Montesquieu's Style.** — The contradictions we have pointed out in the character of Montesquieu appear also in his style.— Only one of his works has more or less unity of tone, namely, the *Considérations*: in this, everything is direct, concise without obscurity, and serious without any bombast. We would say that Montesquieu felt respect for his subject; he was full of Livy, and especially Sallust and Tacitus. A page of the *Considérations* translated into Latin seems to be written in its original language.—As we have said, the style of the *Lettres persanes* is sometimes calm and serious, sometimes light and playful; but the same quality is always evident: the feeling for the right word, and direct sentences going straight to their object.— The style of the *Esprit* is as varied as that of the *Lettres*; evidently Montesquieu wished to be read. He introduced into French literature, a new matter until then generally handled in Latin, or at least in a technical French, which frightened away fashionable readers. To introduce the great public to these discussions, he used various ruses; he cut up his subject, with some chapters only a few lines long, to which he gave piquant or puzzling titles; above all, he concentrated into a few vivid, interrogative and paradoxical sentences, around a well-chosen citation, the whole reasoning that another author would have given at length. This produces



MONTESQUIEU AS FIRST PRESIDENT  
From a coloured print representing his statue  
by Houdon (1744-1828).

the charm we feel in conversing with a very learned and witty man, but this also leaves us rather weary. We feel irritated against Montesquieu for considering us so frivolous, and we seek more serious chapters in which he no longer sacrifices to the graces. Mme du Deffand said of this work: "C'est de l'esprit sur les lois;" and while the witticism is unjust applied to the work as a whole, it admirably characterises numerous passages.

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A PERSIAN LORD AND HIS LADY

Lamp pendant designed by Ch. Ersen (1774), engraved by N. de Launay



ALLEGORICAL COMPOSITION

Designed by Gravelot, engraved by G. Scotin.

## CHAPTER IV.

### VOLTAIRE (1694-1778).

#### SUMMARY

1° **VOLTAIRE** leads a very varied life. He was imprisoned in the Bastille in 1717, visited England from 1726-29, lived at Cirey from 1734 to 1749, in Berlin from 1750 to 1753, in Switzerland and Ferney (1754-78). He died in Paris, after a true apotheosis.

2° **AS A POET**, he wrote : an epic, *La Henriade*; some epistles, satires and odes; he is at his best in lighter poetry,

3° **AS HISTORIAN**, he wrote : *Charles XII* (1731), *Le Siècle de Louis XIV* (1751), *L'Essai sur les mœurs* (1756). He rejuvenated history by introducing into it the study of manners, institutions, arts, and by pointing out the relations between nations. In history his style is **narrative** and not **oratorical**.

He left a vast **correspondence** (10.000 letters at least), addressed to kings, princes, great lords, men of letters, etc. This forms a unique document for a knowledge of the century and of the writer himself.

5° Voltaire's philosophy may be summed up as : **moral and civic liberty, material progress of society, tolerance, deism.**

6° Voltaire's style seems perfectly **natural**. Compared to Bossuet's, or Pascal's, it lacks depth and strength.

## I. — BIOGRAPHY



DECORATED LETTER  
of the XVII century.

**Childhood and Education (1694-1713).** — François-Marie Arouet was born in Paris on November 29, 1694. He was the son of a notary at the Châtelet, from whom he inherited practical sense; for, through all his tragedies and his pamphlets, he never lost sight of his own fortune. From his mother he inherited perhaps a certain elegant and fascinating shrewdness. His godfather was the Abbé de Châteauneuf, a witty free-thinker. François-Marie was ten years old when he was entered at Louis-le-Grand college, where he remained until 1711. This college, whose professors were Jesuits, was then the most celebrated one in Paris. The very talented boy amused, charmed and somewhat

frightened his masters; but he owed to them his assiduous study of the humanities, and the development of his incipient taste for poetry. During his long and agitated life, Voltaire never forgot some of his professors. Perhaps it was in his interest to cultivate relations with Fathers Porée, Tournemine, Brumoy, Thoulié (who became Abbé d'Olivet) and de la Tour; but he certainly retained some gratitude towards them. He cultivated friendships with some of the alumni of the Jesuits, by which he was to profit later: the two Argensons, one of whom became Minister of Foreign Affairs, the other War Minister; the future Maréchal de Richelieu, his hero, who was both a great warrior and a finished free-thinker; Cideville, who, as Counsellor to the Rouen *Parlement*, rendered him great service; and Argental, who became one of his factotums at Paris while he lived at Cirey, in Prussia, or at Ferney, etc.

His education being completed, young Arouet found himself possessed of a decided taste for letters and a life of elegance. He met, in his father's salon, poets like Chaulieu, La Fare, J.-B. Rousseau; and personages like M. de Caumartin, Abbé Servien and his nephew, the Chevalier de Sully. His godfather presented him to the Vendôme family, in the Temple, and made him appreciated there. And the study of law, which his father wished him to undertake, seemed to him more and more unattractive.

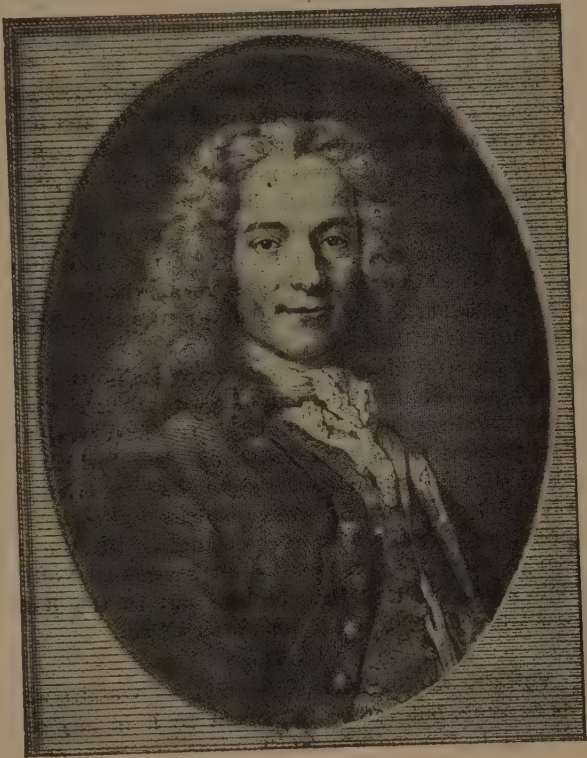
**His First Exile and his Literary Debuts (1714-1718).** — His father, whom his son's audacity troubled, and who wished to make him into a serious man at any cost, placed him as page or secretary with the Marquis de Châteauneuf, Ambassador to Holland (1713). The young man passed several months at The Hague, which was one of the most interesting places of residence for a bold and open mind. From Holland, the intellectual fatherland of Bayle, came, at



that time, all those gazettes and pamphlets which, in the name of philosophica and religious tolerance, made underhand attacks on Louis XIV's regime. But the future philosopher did not stay at The Hague; and it was not until his residence in England, ten years later, that these ideas took hold of him. Returning to Paris in 1714, he

became clerk to M. Alain, an attorney, in the Place Maubert; and it was there he met Thiériot, whom his correspondence shows us as the most devoted though the most unmethodical of friends. At this time, young Arouet wrote verse, satirical verse. M. de Caumartin, a friend of the notary, took François-Marie to his château de Saint-Ange; and the young man profited by his host's conversation, and began *La Henriade* and *OEdipe*. The death of Louis XIV emancipating the society at the Temple, young Arouet reappeared there; and was also presented at Sceaux, where he read *OEdipe*. But his reputation for wit played him a bad

turn; he was believed to be the author of satirical pieces written against the Regent and his daughter, and he was exiled to Tulle, and then to Sully-sur-Loire, in the house of his old fellow — student at Louis-le-Grand (1716). When he was allowed to return, he was no wiser. His intemperate language caused a satire upon the reign of Louis XIV to be attributed to him, of which the last line was: "J'ai vu ces maux, et je n'ai pas vingt ans." This time he was imprisoned in the Bastille, where he remained nearly a year and where he wrote a part of the *Henriade*. Then he



VOLTAIRE AT TWENTY FOUR YEARS OLD  
From the portrait painted by Largillière (1656-1746)  
and engraved by Alex. Pardieu.

was exiled to the estate of his father at Chatenay. Meanwhile, the Théâtre-Français rehearsed his *Œdipe*, which was played and applauded on November 18, 1718. This first public triumph brought him notoriety at least; and it was then that he abandoned the name *Arouet* for *Voltaire* (an anagram made from *Arouet* l (e) j (eune), by changing the "u" into "v" and the "j" into "i").

**From the Tragedy of "Œdipe to his Exile in England (1718-1726).** — For seven years, Voltaire was the most active and happy of men, petted both by literary and aristocratic society. — In 1723, he published *La Ligue* (first title of *La Henriade*), which was printed almost clandestinely at Rouen, under the supervision of the devoted Cideville, and had a prodigious success. Voltaire was then pensioned by the Regent, and later by the king. He wrote *divertissements* for the court, and lighter poems made him sought after and feared. At the same time he occupied himself with the care of his fortune, and advised by the Paris, brothers he began to assure for himself the independence of which he felt the need.

But, to continue his career as a fashionable poet, despite his censorious opinions, Voltaire had remained a wit. Excessively vain, wishing to monopolise favour and applause, he might perhaps have wasted his time in *Epîtres*, or pieces for the court, etc. A "catastrophe" befell which obliged him, if not to change altogether his mind and soul, at least to orientate himself differently. The Chevalier de Rohan, to whom he had replied at the Opera with impertinent pride, sent for him while he was dining with the Duke de Sully, and had him caned under his own eyes by his servants. Voltaire wished, but in vain, to fight a duel with Rohan; he was put in the Bastille, and upon his request was allowed to go to England in May, 1726.

**Voltaire in England (1726-1729).** — Voltaire was not a man to sulk under misfortune, but rather to benefit by it in any possible way. Hardly had he arrived in London when he became the guest of the greatest personages and the friend of the most celebrated writers. Bolingbroke, whom he had known in France, made him his favorite: he frequented the home of Robert Walpole (whose son Horace was, in his turn, to enjoy the salons of Paris), and that of Lord and Lady Hervey (the Lord Hervey to whom he was later to write a fine letter on *Le Siècle de Louis XIV* in 1740), the Duke of Newcastle and the Duchess of Marlborough. He associated familiarly with Pope, Swift, Young, and Clark. The Prince and Princess of Wales received him at court; and the princess, on becoming queen, accepted the dedication of a new edition of *La Ligue*, then called *La Henriade*, which Voltaire published by subscription. Meanwhile, he went to the Drury Lane Theatre, where he witnessed a repertory, entirely new to him, of the plays of Shakespeare and Dryden;—and he learned En-

glish. In his *Lettres philosophiques* or *Lettres anglaises*, only published in 1734, he was to give us his impressions of London, and what advantages he drew from his exile, during which his mind and taste were definitely formed. He enjoyed a political and religious liberty whose value he appreciated; above all he found he had a social position, as a mere man of letters, which he could not bear to renounce; these ministers and great lords were not, as in France, his patrons, but his equals. In future he must have political, civic, moral, literary independence; he had become a citizen and a philosopher, while retaining, from his early education, a more or less narrow classical taste.



FREDERICK II

From the portrait painted by Antoine Pesné (1683-1757)  
and engraved by Wille.

#### In Paris (1729-1734). —

On his return from England in March, 1729, Voltaire stayed with the Countess de Fontaine-Martel, near the Palais-Royal. He first looked after the performance of *Brutus*, which was successfully given in December, 1730. Then he published the *Histoire de Charles XII* at Rouen. Then followed *Eriphyle* (1732), which was a failure; in the same year *Zaïre*, his finest dramatic achievement, was presented, and Voltaire also published *Le Temple du Goût*, a short work of mixed prose and verse, in which the god of taste bestowed rank in accordance with the preferences and interests of M. de Voltaire. *Adélaïde du Guesclin*, another historical tragedy, failed in 1734. The *Lettres philosophiques* or *Lettres anglaises*, to which he had added remarks on Pascal's *Pensées*, appeared clandestinely in 1734; and the book, condemned by the *Parlement*, was seized and burned. Five editions of it were sold in that year alone. But Voltaire was in danger of being arrested, so he left Paris in haste, and went to Cirey, in Champagne, where Mme du Châtelet offered him hospitality.

**Voltaire at Cirey (1734-1749).** — Cirey-sur-Claise, not far from Vassy and Saint-Dizier, was only a few leagues from the Barrois, which belonged to the Duke de Lorraine; so that, in case of danger on French territory, flight was easy. Voltaire therefore felt perfectly safe there, and stayed many years, though not without frequent visits to Paris. At Cirey, in the Society of a woman who was studious to the point of pedantry, and who had a mania for science, Voltaire worked better than in a metropolis where his vanity could not resist worldly temptations. He did not give over writing "petits ouvrages,"; he wrote at this time his *La Pucelle*,—a mock heroic poem, against Joan of Arc, which will always be a stain on Voltaire's work,—his *Mondain*, a satire at once superficial and bold, and the *Défense du Mondain*, etc. He continued to write plays: in 1735, *La Mort de César*, imitated from Shakespeare, without female roles, was given at the college of Harcourt; in 1736, *Alzire*, a great success, and *L'Enfant prodigue*, a tearful comedy; in 1740, *Mahomet*, only given in 1742 in Paris; in 1743, *Méropé*, which was a triumph; in 1745, *La Princesse de Navarre*, a comedy-ballet, performed at Versailles; in 1748, *Sémiramis*, made up of fragments of *Eriphyle*, and which succeeded. Under the influence of "la belle Emilie," Voltaire also occupied himself with physical science. He sent for scientific apparatus, and wrote a translation of Newton's *Elementa*. He sent to the Academy of Sciences a memoir *Sur la nature du feu*. Finally, he worked on historical and philosophical works; and it was at Cirey that he prepared with indefatigable energy his *Siècle de Louis XIV.*

But Voltaire at Cirey must not be regarded as a recluse obstinately sulking away from Paris, or not daring to appear there. First he went to the college of Harcourt to see the performance of *La Mort de César*; he also saw *Méropé* from Mme de Luxembourg's box; he presented himself in 1736 and in 1743 to the French Academy, by which he was at last elected in 1746, and where he delivered a remarkable discourse on the universality of the French language. In fact, he was almost restored to the favour of the powers that be, thanks to the Argensons and to Richelieu. He was charged with a mission to Frédéric in 1743; but the latter, who had been for a long time coquetting with Voltaire, whom he had seen in 1740, was not able to keep him. On his return from Berlin, Richelieu had him compose *La Princesse de Navarre* for the wedding festivities of the Dauphin and the Infanta of Spain. He was then appointed gentleman of the chamber in ordinary to the king, and it was during his tenure of this position that he wrote in a few days his *Poème de Fontenoy*. He hoped to ally his fortunes with those of Mme de Pompadour; but the queen's party, by whom Voltaire was suspected, gained the ascendancy, and his favour at the French court was of short duration.

Though everybody worked hard at Cirey, they amused themselves also, and received many friends and admirers. It was not yet like the incessant pilgrimage of Ferney, but there was already a theatre in which the guests were oblig-



ed to act Voltaire's pieces (1). The latter travelled, often with Mme du Châtelet; he was seen at Brussels and Lille, and in 1748 at the court of Lunéville, with king Stanislas (2). It was there that Mme du Châtelet died on September 10, 1749.

**Voltaire and Frederick II (1750-1753).** — After the death of Mme du Châtelet, Voltaire returned to Paris and lived temporarily in the rue Traversière. Spurred again by his passion for the theatre, and his jealousy of Crébillon, who was protected by Mme de Pompadour, he rewrote the tragedies of the old poet, and produced *Oreste* (from *Electra*), and acted in his own house *Rome sauvée* (adapted from *Catiline*). Meanwhile, Frederick II redoubled his invitations to Voltaire, and the latter, disappointed at not being restored to favour at court, left for Berlin June 18, 1750, where he arrived on July 10.



THE CASTLE OF FERNEY

From a drawing by Brandoïn, engraved by Masquelier.

Very well received by Frederick, and lodged near him at Potsdam, Voltaire was at first enchanted. His letters to d'Argental and his niece, Mme Denis, were full of compliments for the "Salomon du Nord" and the "banquets de Platon", where a group of Frenchmen, witty and bold, presided over by Frederick, indulged in the freest conversation. Among them were Maupertuis, president of the Academy of Berlin, a celebrated mathematician; La Mettrie, a physicist, who had been compromised by his too freely expressed materialistic opinions, and to whom Frederick had offered a refuge; and a few subalterns of an adventurous spirit and easy morality. But Voltaire and Frederick, both of them sensitive and domineering, could not for long sustain their friendly understanding, and several incidents boded trouble. Frederick said to La Mettrie, who reported it to Voltaire: "I shall have need of him a year more

(1) See the letters of Mme de Graffigny from 1738-1739, quoted by M. LANSON (*Choix de lettres du dix-huitième siècle*).

(2) G. MACGRAS, *La Cour de Lunéville*.

at most; one squeezes the orange and rejects the skin." Of what use was Voltaire to him, in fact? To correct his French verses, enliven his suppers, and with his presence shed some philosophical and literary lustre on the Prussian court. According to his own opinion, Frederick bought these advantages very dear, Voltaire receiving a pension of 20,000 francs. Voltaire meanwhile, always too attentive to his financial interests, made some doubtful speculations which gave rise to a scandalous law-suit. He quarrelled with Maupertuis, against whom he wrote his *Diatribes du docteur Akakia*. The king became angry, and on January 1, 1753, Voltaire returned him his Chamberlain's key, his decorations and his pension. A brief reconciliation did not prevent a final rupture in March 1753; and Voltaire, giving out that he was ill and going to take the waters at Plombières, left Berlin.

He went by way of Leipzig, Gotha and Cassel, and was everywhere well received. But, at Frankfort, an agent of the King of Prussia arrested him, seized his baggage, and kept him prisoner for five weeks in company with Mme Denis, who had come to join him,—all this in order to oblige him to restore "l'œuvre de poësie" written by the king, which Voltaire had carried off, intending to make all Europe laugh at Frederick's expense. But he could only obtain his liberty by returning this precious forfeit. He then departed once more, and, fêted everywhere, he went through Mayence and Mannheim he arrived at Strasbourg in August, 1753.

**Voltaire in Switzerland and at Ferney (1754-1778).** — After the unpleasant time he had had in Berlin, Voltaire decided to remain his own master, and to settle in a free country, far from all despotism. He was rich, having continued to speculate in military equipment, and could, if he liked, become a proprietor and lord. He went to Geneva, by way of Lyons, in December, 1754, where he was the guest of Tronchin, cousin of the famous physician, stayed a short while at the château de Prangins, and rented a winter residence at Monrion, between Lausanne and the Lake. At the same time, he bought, for his summer home, the Saint-Jean place, near Geneva, which he named *Les Délices*. Finally, he began to work again.

Not that his extraordinary activity had ever been suspended. In 1751 he had published in Berlin his *Siècle de Louis XIV*, and had commenced the *Essai sur les Mœurs*. He had just finished *L'Orphelin de la Chine* (acted in 1755), and *Les Annales de l'Empire*. He composed in 1756 his *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne*, corresponded with everybody worth while in Europe, and especially got up plays in his own theatre at *Les Délices*. He acted too many, and the Grand Council of Geneva enjoined him to stop these performances on the territory of the Republic, forbidding Genevans to attend them. Voltaire revenged himself by inspiring d'Alembert's article on Genevain the *Encyclopédie*, through which he bestowed compromising praise on the Pastors, and showed the need for a

theatre in the city of Calvin. J.-J. Rousseau, who had already attacked him at the time of his *Poème sur le Désastre de Lisbonne*, wrote against him his *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles*. In one way Voltaire was enchanted with all this tumult, but also rather disquieted; for he wished to act plays without interference.

So he bought, not far from Geneva but on French territory, the estate of Fernex (the spelling "Ferney" is Voltaire's), and rented, from President de Brosses, the county-seat of Tournay. He wrote to Thiriot on december, 24, 1758 "I have four paws instead of two; one foot in Lausanne, in a very handsome winter residence; one foot in Les Délices, near Geneva, where interesting people come to see me — so much for my forefeet. My hind feet are at Ferney and in the county of Tournay." Ferney was his favourite home. He built a chateau there, endowed the village with clock factories, and a church in which he had his Squire's pew. So Ferney became a sort of court, where great lords and men of letters came to visit the patriarch, who offered continuous hospitality to an

average of about fifty persons. The Prince of Brunswick, the Landgrave of Hesse, the Duke de Villars, the Marquis de Florian, the Chevalier de Boufflers, d'Alembert, Turgot, Abbé Morellet, La Harpe, Lekain, Grétry, etc., visited Ferney, accepted roles in their host's tragedies, and reluctantly left to make way for other guests; and this went on for eighteen years.

It might be believed that Voltaire, after his laborious life at Cirey and Berlin, known as the author of *La Henriade*, of *Charles XII* and of *the Siècle de Louis XIV*, and sixty years of age when he settled at Les Délices, would be content to enjoy his unquestioned glory, and to enthrone himself before his adorers. Not at all; he was never more active than now, never produced so much, nor ever



VOLTAIRE CROWNED AT THE REPRESENTATION OF *Irène*  
30<sup>th</sup> MARCH 1778

*From an anonymous contemporary print in colours.*

The marchioness of Villette who is on the right of Voltaire, is going to place her crown on his head, his niece Madame Denis is on his left.

wielded, by work, or word so much influence. — He was still a poet and man of letters, and was to remain so till his last day. He composed tragedies: in 1760, *Tancrède*, one of his great successes and the last if we omit the apotheosis of *Irène*; then, from 1762 to 1763, some pieces more philosophical than tragical, such as *Olympie*, *Le Triumvirat*, *Les Scythes*, *Les Guèbres*, etc. He wrote more historical works, which suggest patient research: *L'Histoire de la Russie sous Pierre le Grand* (1772); and, in the same year, *Le Précis du Siècle de Louis XV*, and *L'Histoire du Parlement*. But all that was nothing, and no longer represented the real Voltaire, who thenceforth was almost entirely given over to polemics and satire. — After 1759 his novels, *Candide*, *L'Ingénu*, *L'Homme aux quarante écus*, etc., though charming, were less tales than they were philosophical and economic pamphlets. — He discharged brochures, satires, theatrical pieces at Le Franc de Pompignan, (whose discourse when he was received by the Academy was a lively attack on the encyclopedic party), against Fréron, the indefatigable and courageous editor of *L'Année littéraire*; against Palissot, author of the comedy *Les Philosophes*; and among these were *Les Quand*, *Les Si*, *Les Mais*, *Le Pauvre Diable*, *Le Russe à Paris*, and *L'Écossaise*. — He worked on the *Encyclopédie*, and in 1764 collected his articles and republished them as the *Dictionnaire philosophique*. He added to this, from 1770 to 1772, his *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*. Then appeared a number of brochures with piquant titles, as short and animated as newspaper articles, in which he seized upon current events with an amazing flair, and which he shot like so many sharp and deadly arrows. All this part of his work, collected in the volumes of *Mélanges* in the complete editions, is now less known: but it is there we find the real Voltaire, much more than in *Zaire*, or *Le Siècle*.

However, his activity was chiefly in his correspondence, for he wrote or dictated twenty letters a day. Kings, princes, great ladies, ministers, men of letters, men of affairs, all classes of society exchanged ideas with him.

Finally, the time came when he intervened in favour of all whom he considered victims of religious fanaticism or injustice. He undertook the rehabilitation of the Calas and the Sirvens, using in their favour his credit, his talent and his money. Nothing discouraged him, neither the slowness of the courts, nor the menaces of those in power, nor the indifference of public opinion; he triumphed over every obstacle, and won complete victories. If he had never upheld tolerance except by such actions as these, had never stooped, as he did in his pamphlets, to low anti-religious jests, nothing could be brought against his philosophic zeal. He worked with the same ardour for the rehabilitation of Lally-Tollendal. And he could say, with legitimate pride: "I have done a little good: that is my best work".

We must say the same of his adoption of a great-grandniece of the "grand Corneille", whom he brought to Ferney, reared and educated under his own eyes, enriched with a dowry and married to a young officer. It is true that, to





TRANSLATION OF RESTES OF VOLTAIRE TO THE PANTHEON  
From a composition by Lagrenée son (1775-1832) engraved by S. C. Miger.

accumulate this dowry, he wrote his *Commentaire sur Corneille*, which is sometimes too narrowly and unjustly severe. But its author was the tragic poet and the purist, not the man who had done a generous action.

**Last Journey to Paris, and Death (1778).** — Voltaire did not wish to die, however, without seeing again the metropolis where he had known "the first rays of glory", and for which, even in his kingdom at Ferney, he suffered nostalgia. The new reign had begun with fortunate reforms and excellent intentions; Voltaire had friends in power, the moment seemed favourable, and his tragedy *Irène* was being given in the Théâtre Français. Voltaire left Ferney on February 4, 1778, and arrived at Paris on the 10th. The triumphal visits and ovations of this his last visit are well-known. Every distinguished person in the city, French or foreign, hastened to the hôtel of the Marquis de Villette in the rue de Beaune, where Voltaire was staying. Franklin brought him his grandson, whom the patriarch blessed, saying "Dieu et liberté!" On March 30th, he repaired to the Academy, where he was elected director by acclamation, presided over the meeting, and outlined the plan for a new dictionary, for which he was to write the letter A. On the same day, he attended the sixth performance of *Irène*. An actor entered his box and placed a crown of laurels on his head. During the entr'acte between *Irène* and *Nanine*, his bust was set upon the stage and crowned in its turn by all the players amid the acclamations of the audience. But so many emotions exhausted him, and he died on May 30, 1778. His nephew, Abbé Mignot, had him buried in the Abbey of Scellières, in Champagne; but in July, 1791, his body was brought to the Panthéon.

According to a long believed legend, Voltaire's coffin was profaned in 1814, and his remains thrown on the dung-heap. It is now proved that Voltaire's body lies intact in the tomb where he was laid in 1791.

## II. — VOLTAIRE'S POETIC WORKS (1).

**La Henriade.**—Since Ronsard, there had been many attempts at writing epics in France. But it may be said, changing a little the famous witticism of Malézieux, that the French "n'avaient plus la tête épique." Despite some genuine beauty of detail, neither the *Saint Louis* of Father Lemoyne (1653), nor the *Alaric* of Scudéry (1654), nor the *Clovis* of Desmarests de Saint-Sorlin (1657), nor—even more—*La Pucelle* by Chapelain, half of which appeared in 1656, could survive the epigrams Boileau directed against them. The author of *L'Art poétique*, besides, with his theories about the pagan marvellous, contributed to render the epic an artificial and lifeless work; and the *Traité du poème épique* by Father Le Bossu (1675), by directing poets to the allegorical marvellous, led them still farther from the sources of true inspiration.

How did Voltaire, whose début was made in frivolous verses, and who was then nothing more than an audacious wit, come to undertake an epic? Evidently, from his innate taste for history and philosophy. Without perhaps taking account of the real na-

(1) We shall speak later, p. 652, of Voltaire's plays.

ture of his inspiration, and especially without yielding frankly to it, the future author of *Charles XII*, the *Siècle*, the *Essai sur les mœurs*, was fascinated by the narrative side of a subject which contained, at the same time, a plea in favour of tolerance. He prepared seriously the historical part; he talked with those who had received from their fathers direct impressions of the reign of Henri IV. He sketched his poem in the Bastille rewrote it, completed it; and when he had had an opportunity of admiring the English constitution, he introduced a long episode into his work in which he showed himself, long before Montesquieu, an anglo-maniac politician and economist. *La Henriade* for him, therefore, was a sort of frame in which he set his ideas clad in poetic form; and the great success of *La Henriade* lay in this fact.

In its definitive form, in 1728, *La Henriade* consisted of ten cantos.

*Canto I.* Henri III besieges Paris, with Henri de Navarre. He sends the latter to England to ask help of Elizabeth. In a tempest Béarnais is cast away on an island, where an old man predicts his approaching conversion. Description of England and its government. — *Canto II.* Henri tells Elisabeth about the religious wars; la Saint-Barthélemy. — *Canto III.* Continuation of the narrative. Death of Charles IX. Assassination of the Duke de Guise. Elizabeth promises help. — *Canto IV.* The Ligueurs, with d'Aumale at their head, are about to seize Henri III's camp, when the return of the Béarnais prevents them. La Discorde flies to Rome, finds Politique and brings her to Paris, incites revolt in the Sorbonne and arms the monks. — *Canto V.* La Discorde excites Jacques Clément, and has him conducted to the king by the demon Fanaticisme. Assassination of Henri III. Proclamation of Henri IV by the army. — *Canto VI.* The States of the Ligue assemble at Paris to elect a king. Henri IV attacks the city. Appearance of Saint Louis to Henri IV. — *Canto VII.* Henri IV is transported to Heaven, while sleeping, by Saint Louis, who shows him, in the Palais des Destins, his ancestors, his posterity and the great men of France (Charlemagne, Clovis, La Trémouille, Montmorency, du Guesclin, Bayard, Jeanne d'Arc, Louis XIII, Richelieu, Mazarin, Colbert, Louis XIV, Condé, Turenne, Villars, Louis XV, Fleury). — *Canto VIII.* The Count d'Egmont brings help from Spain to Mayenne and the Ligueurs. The battle of Ivry (1). — *Canto IX.* La Discorde goes to find Amour, in order to turn aside Henri IV from besieging Paris. Amour lures the hero to the château inhabited by Gabrielle d'Estrées. Duplessis-Mornay comes to tear Henri IV away from this idleness. — *Canto X.* The return of the king. Paris hungry. Truth comes to enlighten the mind of Henri IV, who is converted to Catholicism. Paris opens her doors to him.

It is unnecessary to point out the numerous scholarly imitations from Virgil's *Eneid* (narrative, dream, combats, etc.). For Canto IX Voltaire was inspired by the episode of the gardens of Armide in Tasso's *Jerusalem Liberata*. The style of *La Henriade* is of the kind we now find the least satisfactory. After *Jocelyn*, *la Légende des siècles*, etc., we can no longer lend ourselves to the conception either of this system of allegory, as a substitute for a direct analysis of sentiments, or of the cold elegance of the descriptions. The account of Saint-Bartholomew's Day, the battle of Ivry, the assassination of the Duke de Guise and of Henri III seem to us hopelessly insipid. However, *La Henriade* is still readable because of the wit or directness of some of the verses—and the poem is short.

**Philosophical Poetry. Epistles.**—Voltaire composed seven *Discours* in verse, *Sur l'Homme*: 1° *De l'égalité des conditions*; 2° *De la liberté*; 3° *De l'envie*; 4° *De la modération en tout*; 5° *Sur la nature du plaisir*; 6° *De la nature de l'homme*; 7° *Sur la vraie vertu*. These discourses were written between 1738 and 1740, and sent one after the other to Frederick. — In 1756, Voltaire wrote his *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne*, apropos of the

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 669.

earthquake of 1755; J.-J. Rousseau addressed a long and eloquent letter to Voltaire, upholding Providence and optimism against Voltaire's pessimism.—In the same year Voltaire wrote his poem on *la Religion naturelle*.—All these philosophical pieces were greatly admired during the eighteenth century; they possess clarity and some passages are of lively piquancy. After A. Chénier, Lamartine, Vigny, Sully Prudhomme, it seems to us that even philosophy may speak another language in verse.

The very numerous Epistles, some didactic, others more free and intimate in tone, have retained part of their value. In these Voltaire is a poet, if poetry means the delicate art of good phrasing, of expressing pleasantly a fine thought or tender sentiment.—Among the Epistles which are both didactic and somewhat personal, may be noted the *Épître à Boileau* (1769) and the *Épître à Horace* (1772) (1). But there are still better ones. The *Épître aux Mânes de M. de Gémonville* (1729) is a masterpiece, the last lines of which evince a sensibility too rarely found in Voltaire, and worthy of Musset (2). We should also note the *Épître à Mme du Châtelet*, on Calumny (1734); à Mme Denis, sur les *Charmes de la retraite* (3); the *Épître* he addressed to his house *Les Délices* in 1755 ("O maison d'Aristippe, ô jardins d'Epicure," several *Épîtres au roi de Prusse*, the *Épître à un homme* (Turgot, 1776), etc. In this genre Voltaire was a master. For him, the *Épître* was really a letter in verse, as for Marot; and, in his correspondence, how often prose gives place to lovely and witty poems (4)!

**Miscellaneous poetry.**—Voltaire's *Satires* are not written in didactic vein, like Boileau's. The most famous—those in which Voltaire's talent, formed of piquant agitation and pleasant impertinence, is most evident—are: *Le Mondain* (1736), in which the theory of Progress is sustained by very superficial but very witty arguments (5); *La Défense du Mondain* (1737); *le Pauvre diable* (1758), an amusing review of all the crafts which a man whose life is a failure might successively attempt, but especially an occasion for sneers at Desfontaines, Fréron, abbé Trublet, etc. (6);—*La Vanité* (1765), written against Le Franc de Pompignan; *Le Russe à Paris* (1760), a dialogue containing attacks upon all Voltaire's enemies, Pompignan, Palissot, le Journal de Trévoux, the Jesuits Berthier and Nonotte, abbé Trublet, Fréron.—Voltaire is excessive and unjust in his *Satires*; he indulges in the most odious personalities, but the form of work is always perfect.

There was no end to the short occasional pieces he wrote day by day. His verses on the death of Adrienne Le Couvreur, the great actress (1730), are in no sense equal to Musset's on Malibran; but, under their fashionable elegance, we feel true sincerity. His epigrams, or madrigals, to Mme du Châtelet, Mlle Clairon, Mme de Boufflers, etc., are models of their kind.

As a lyric poet Voltaire is less successful. His *Ode pour Messieurs de l'Académie des Sciences qui ont été sous l'équateur et au cercle polaire mesurer des degrés de latitude*, his *Odes à la Vérité*, his *Poème de Fontenoy*, etc., are pseudo-poetry like *La Henriade*.

We may class *Le Temple du Goût* (1733) with his poetry, as it is full of verses. Voltaire imagines that he goes to this Temple with Cardinal de Polignac, author of the Latin poem *Anti-Lucretius*. It contains a long satirical part, very tiresome for readers of today: *Critique*, a goddess, forbids a certain number of authors to enter the Temple, all of whom are enemies of Voltaire. More interesting are the judgments on seventeenth century writers: in the poem appear Mme de Sévigné, Chaulieu, La Fare, Hamilton

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 656.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 662.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 665.

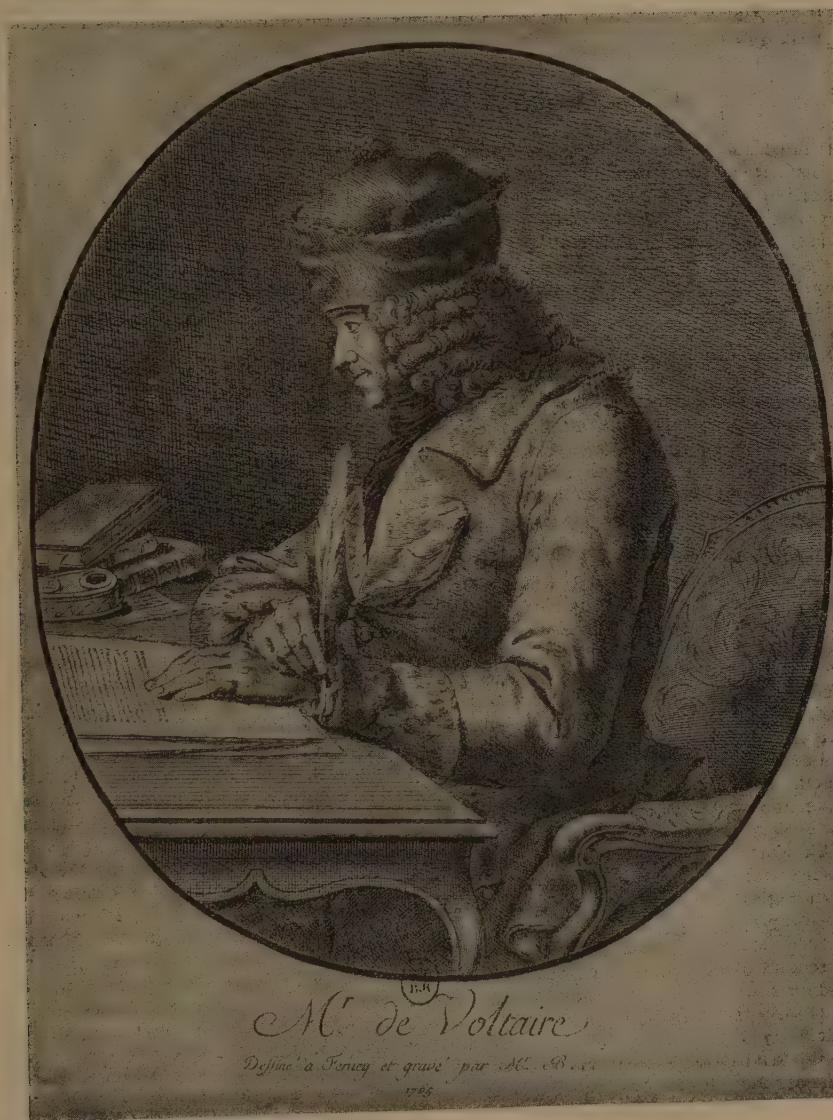
(4) See the letter to Cideville, July 11, 1744, quoted by HÉMON, *Cours de littérature*, Voltaire, p. 30.

(5) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 663.

(6) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 296.



VOLTAIRE (1694-1778)



*M<sup>r</sup> de Voltaire*

*Deſſiné à Paris et gravé par M. B.*

1765

PORTRAIT OF VOLTAIRE IN 1765  
From a contemporary print.

and Bourdaloue who converse with Pascal, Fénelon, Bossuet, La Fontaine, Despréaux, Molière, Racine... But each of them admits his own faults, which he corrects according to Voltaire's taste.

### III. — VOLTAIRE AS AN HISTORIAN.

It must not be supposed that the seventeenth century did nothing for the progress of historical writing; for, after the authors of the *Mémoires*, a few obscure but serious historians may be mentioned, like Mézeray, Saint-Réal and Vertot, who prepared the way for and foretold the true historical method. Bossuet, in the third part of the *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*, and especially in his *Histoire des variations*, proved his possession of some of the merits of the historian; and, as we have seen, his documentary preparation for that work was marvellously scientific and conscientious. Claude Fleury published in 1691 a *Histoire de l'Église*, which showed great progress beyond the work of his predecessors in this vein. At the opening of the eighteenth century, Father Daniel, a Jesuit, wrote a voluminous *Histoire de France* (1713), for which he made serious research, but in which he showed a lack of impartiality. What was most lacking in these otherwise respectable works was, first of all, a general view of the secret relation between facts, institutions, and moral, and manners; they also lacked a realisation of the relation between epochs, from the double point of view of ideas and local colour; and finally, they lacked that ease and clearness of style which knows how to dominate and organise its matter, and without sacrificing accuracy, makes an historical work not only readable but even pleasant. And that was just what Voltaire was to give us.

**Histoire de Charles XII** (1731).—Voltaire was not the first to be fascinated by this hero; but he rejuvenated the subject. First, he obtained personal and very precise information from the king of Poland, Stanislas Leczinski; also from former ambassadors, like Colbert de Croissy, de Fierville, des Alleurs, from noblemen attached to Charles XII, Count Poniatowski and M. de Villelongue. He especially questioned Fabrice, Chamberlain to King George I of England, who had lived seven years in Sweden. Ten years previously, Voltaire had known the Swedish minister, Goertz, of whom he has to speak so often in his history. Voltaire finished the work on his return from London; but, as its printing in Paris was forbidden, he had it published by Jore at Rouen. The *Histoire de Charles XII* had great success, both in being read and in securing its author enemies. Voltaire had to reply to numerous and minute criticisms, but on the whole he triumphed. Today, his *Charles XII* is as much esteemed by historians as it is by men of letters.

This work is divided into eight books, and covers a period beginning with the condition of Sweden before Charles XII and ending with his death. Voltaire follows the chronological and synchronistic order; he passes from Sweden to Poland, from Russia to Turkey, according to the succession of events. He first shows us Charles XII triumphing over the Danes, the Russians and the Poles, and forcing a king upon Poland. In the second part of the reign, from 1709 to 1718, we follow Charles XII to Pultava and Bender; and Voltaire profits by the opportunity to make interesting digressions concerning Peter the Great and Turkey. Voltaire has been criticised for not having sufficiently explained the interior conditions in Sweden during his hero's campaigns, and not having made clear the reasons for his sojourn in Turkey. But the book was no romance, though—in Cordorcet's witty speech—it is as exciting as a novel. The accounts of the battle of Pultava, of Charles XII's resistance at Bender, and of his death before Frédérikshald, are remarkable (1).

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 304; 2nd cycle, p. 672.

**Le Siècle de Louis XIV** (1751, definitive edition in 1768).—Voltaire could have said that he wrote this book "by always thinking about it." From 1732 on, his correspondence reveals that he was busily gathering documents. His relations with the best French and English society enabled him to procure information at first hand, and he read, as he tells us, two hundred volumes. Through the Argensons he had access to State papers.—However, this mass of information, this infinity of detail, did not prevent him from dominating his subject, which consisted of the history of men's minds during the most enlightened of all ages. The scheme of the work, though very clear, has the disadvantage of subdividing the book without indicating the dependency of certain events.—Chapter I is an introduction; chapter II is devoted to *l'état de l'Europe avant Louis XIV*; from chapter III to chapter XXIII Voltaire sets forth the foreign policies of Mazarin and Louis XIV, and recounts military operations; this first part ends, in chapter XXIV, with a picture of Europe from the Peace of Utrecht to the death of Louis XIV.—From chapter XXV to chapter XXVIII, particulars and anecdotes. Here Voltaire places all that he cannot put into the other chapters, and which he does not want to lose. These are the details, new at the time, which he gathered from oral testimony or unpublished memoirs. Now that these anecdotes are in general circulation, we underestimate the real value of the four chapters in which they are to be read (1). Chapters XXIX and XXX are devoted to domestic government: justice, commerce, police, finances, etc. Here Voltaire amazed contemporary readers by his knowledge of all these technical questions, and by his talent for making them perfectly clear.—Chapter XXXI: *Des Sciences*.—Chapters XXXII, XXXIII and XXXIV: *Des Beaux-Arts* in both France and Europe. Under the name of *Beaux-Arts* Voltaire includes letters as well as music, painting and sculpture. It is in chapter XXXII that he enumerates all the great seventeenth century writers, and pronounces upon them the judgments which are so interesting to study for the light they throw upon his literary taste and his philosophy. He completed this chapter by a list of French writers, a reading of which is even more curious and instructive inasmuch as Voltaire there speaks more freely (see the names of Bayle, Boileau, Bossuet, Descartes, Fénelon, La Fontaine, etc.) Religious affairs are dealt with from chapter XXXV to chapter XXXIX, which is the last (*la régale*, Calvinism, Jansenism, Quietism, the missions in China). In this part of the work Voltaire yields too often to his prejudices, the most serious of which was at that time his conviction that theological disputes were only worthy of being treated with disdain and persiflage. From this point of view the seventeenth century, which he thought so great in its warriors, administrators or artists, appeared to him altogether behind the times; and his criticism of fanaticism under Louis XIV is an indirect apology for the philosophy of the eighteenth century.

The plan of the work, as we have said, is over-subdivided, as causes are thus often separated from effects. For instance, the war with Holland, recounted in chapter X, was caused by the resistance of the Dutch to the French commercial treaties, which is not explained until chapter XXIX. The war of the Augsburg League, in chapter XVI, should have been preceded by a study of the position of Protestants in Europe, whereas we only obtain these details in chapter XXXVI. Yet, such as it is, this plan was perhaps the best to produce the effect Voltaire wished to make, and he gives his readers a succession of harmonious and clear surveys, upon which he comments at his ease.

But there are graver accusations against him, and these have been very well formulated by Nisard: "What Voltaire's book lacks," he says, "in order to be the most exact picture of the great century, is moral elevation. In reality, the historian is interested only in its civilisation. Now, the most precious benefits of civilisation are those which

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 306.



ameliorate the moral condition of mankind; but to Voltaire civilisation is epicurean."—Fénelon had a clearer vision, when he reproached Louis XIV; through the words of Mentor, with too much fondness for war, luxury and pleasure; in Voltaire you find no restriction for these things, quite the contrary! All Voltaire's blame and ridicule fell upon men like Descartes, Pascal, Arnauld, Bossuet, who seemed to him, because of their metaphysics or theology, to have arrested progress, while they are an everlasting honour to the human intellect.

Nevertheless, Voltaire has the merit of having been the first to write what we call nowadays a "history of civilisation" in a style as vivid and easy as it is varied and direct. In spite of the progress made in historical science, the *Siècle de Louis XIV* remains an intelligent and powerful work.

**Essai sur les Mœurs et l'Esprit des Nations** (1756).—Published first in instalments in *Le Mercure* in 1745 and 1746, the *Essai* had been undertaken for Mme du Châtelet, whom Voltaire wished to inspire with a taste for history. The work begins with Charlemagne and is a sort of "universal" history down to the reign of Louis XIII. Voltaire, therefore, continued Bossuet's *Discours*; but while Bossuet derived all events from an all-ruling Providence, Voltaire sees in humanity alone the development of progress, progress in the well-being of peoples, and in the arts and sciences.—Though this criterion is sufficiently weak, and though Voltaire, even more than in *Le Siècle*, often speaks lightly of Christianity, his mind was too open not to be conscious of the grandest things, and he at times really does justice, to the civilising action of religion.—Among the most interesting pages are: The survey of Mohamedan civilisation in Spain (chapter XLIV); those describing manners and morals, commerce and wealth during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (chapter LXXXI); the arts in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (chapter CXXI); France under Louis XIII (chapter CLXXV). The work is handled in the same manner as *le Siècle de Louis XIV*, but in a firmer style.

It will suffice us to point out the other historical works: *Le Précis du siècle de Louis XV* (1769), which was at first simply *l'Histoire de la guerre de 1741*, undertaken by Voltaire as historiographer to the king, and in which the Battle of Fontenoy (chapter XV) should be especially mentioned;—*l'Histoire du Parlement de Paris* (1769), which is more or less of a satirical pamphlet; *l'Histoire de la Russie sous Pierre le Grand* (1759), the reverse of the *Charles XII*, and inferior to the preceding works: we feel that Voltaire is hampered by his wish not to displease Peter's Elisabeth, daughter, and Catherine II.

**Summary of Judgment of Voltaire as Historian.**—Without forgetting the reservations we have made, let us say that Voltaire rejuvenated and in a way created history as we conceive it to-day: 1° By his respect for sources, his ardour in seeking documents, and his skill in comparing and utilising them; 2° By the place he gives in history to the nation as a whole, whose morals and manners, costumes, commerce, finances, etc., he studies with curiosity; 3° By the importance he gives to the intellectual and artistic movement by placing it parallel with politics, properly so-called; 4° By the relations he constantly establishes between the nations of the whole world, in order to follow the development of mankind throughout the ages; 5° By his style, which is no longer oratorical but narrative.

#### IV. — PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS, NOVELS, MISCELLANIES.

In this chapter, we shall only note a few titles; but it must be understood that this part of Voltaire's work, though now the least known, is that which best explains his



influence over his contemporaries. Here we find the militant Voltaire, the writer of current events.

**Lettres philosophiques or Lettres anglaises** (1731-1734).—In these letters are Voltaire's reflections concerning England, where he had lived three years (1726-1729). There are twenty-five letters, of which the most remarkable are : *Le Parlement* (VII), *Le Commerce* (X), *L'Insertion de la petite vérole (vaccine)* (XI), *Sur Locke* (XIII), *Sur Descartes et Newton* (XIV), *La Tragédie* (XVIII) (1), *La Comédie* (XIX), *Sur la considération*



VOLTAIRE PRESIDING AT A PHILOSOPHERS' REPAST

*From a contemporary anonymous print.*

Around Voltaire are assembled Pather Adam, Abbé Maury, Condorcet, Diderot, La Harpe, etc.

*qu'on doit aux gens de lettres* (XXIII), *Sur les Pensées de Pascal* (XXV).—This was Voltaire's earliest philosophical work, and we find in it at least the germ of all the ideas he was to develop later, as well as the style—ironical, bantering, biting, eloquent—which was to be that of his novels and his pamphlets.

**Candide or l'Optimisme** (1759).—This little novel contains, under a trifling and sometimes cynical form, a summing up of all the Voltairian scepticism. It is an indirect reply to Rousseau who upheld optimism, that is, the action of Providence in the world. Voltaire declares that everything goes by chance, and concludes : *Cultivons notre jardin*. The most famous passage in *Candide* is the description of the supper of the dethroned kings at Venice.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd, cycle, p. 662.

**Micromégas** (1752).—Voltaire imagines that an inhabitant of one of the planets of the star Sirius, whom he calls Micromégas (from two Greek words, which signify small and large), travels in this world, and learns here that nothing is either large or small in itself, but everything is relative. In this witty novel Voltaire imitated Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

**Traité de la tolérance** (1763).—This treatise was inspired by the Calas affair. It is known that Jean Calas, of Toulouse, was accused by public opinion of having had his son, Marc-Antoine, destroyed, because he wished to turn Catholic. In spite of his protest, Jean Calas was tortured and broken on the wheel (1761). Voltaire's object was to rehabilitate the memory of Jean Calas, and he succeeded.

**Dictionnaire philosophique** (1761).—This is the most significant of Voltaire's most characteristic works. It consists of articles, in alphabetical order, on *l'Âme, le Beau, la Gloire, la Guerre, l'Homme, le Rire, le Style, la Tragédie*. He leaves no subjects unattacked, handling them sometimes with questionable lightness. His hatred for fanaticism (the name he gave to all positive religions) often deprived him of his sang-froid and his sense of justice. But when he touches upon society, criticism or literature, he is perfect.

## V. — CORRESPONDENCE.

We have about ten thousand of Voltaire's letters, and this is not half his vast correspondence between 1713 and 1778. To whom did he write? To everybody. The whole of society in the eighteenth century, French and foreign, corresponded with him (1).

The first group may be formed of his friends—those who helped him to get his work published, to get his plays produced, to invest or distribute his money; viz :—Count d'ARGENTAL (died 1788), nephew of Mme de Tencin and councillor to the *Parlement* of Paris, who was especially entrusted with Voltaire's affairs with the *Comédie-Française*, the "tripot." When Voltaire wrote to him and his wife, he called them "my-angels."—CIDEVILLE (died 1776), Councillor to the *Parlement* of Rouen, a fellow-student of Voltaire's at Louis-le-Grand; he helped him to publish *La Henriade* and the *Lettres anglaises*.—Abbé MOUSSINOT (died 1741), canon of Saint-Merri, was Voltaire's treasurer and factotum at Paris for five years. Voltaire entrusted him with all sorts of commissions, which were always perfectly carried out.—THIÉRIOT (died 1772) whom Voltaire had known at M. Alain's in the place Maubert. He was a lazy man, incapable of the slightest perseverance in the organisation of his life, but for whom Voltaire always retained, while often scolding him, a kind of tenderness. Besides, no one was more devoted to Voltaire than Thiériot.

We may gather the women into a second group, the most varied and the most original : Mme DE GRAFFIGNY (died 1758), author of *Cécile* and *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*. She has left a piquant account of the life at Cirey.—Mlle de LESPINASSE (died 1776). Mme DU DEFFAND (died 1780).—The DUCHESS DE CHOISEUL (died 1801), one of the most simple, lovable and loyal of women.—Mme DENIS, daughter of Mme Mignot, Voltaire's sister, had been a widow since 1744; she met her uncle on his return from Berlin, and settled with him at Les Délices and Ferney. From Berlin Voltaire wrote his most interesting letters to this niece, and in these we can follow the daily evolution of his relations with Frederick.—Mme NECKER (died 1794), wife of the Minister and mother

(1) For all Voltaire's correspondents whom we shall quote, see the various *Choix de lettres* of Voltaire (E. Fallex, Brunel, Aubertin, etc.), and the *Choix de lettres du dix-huitième siècle* by M. Lanson, where there are notices and quotations. But we shall only quote from those whom we shall not have occasion to study elsewhere; thus, for women's letters, see the chap. on Salons; for philosophers', see chap. on the *Encyclopédie*, etc. Cf. *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 308, 2nd cycle, p. 677.

of Mme de Staël. She raised a subscription to have a statue of Voltaire made by Pigalle. On this subject the patriarch of Ferney wrote her a note which is a masterpiece of humour (May 21, 1770) (1).—Mlle QUINAULT (died 1783), who took waiting-maids' parts at the Comédie-Française, whose brother, Quinault-Dufresne, one of Voltaire's principal dramatic interpreters, was famous for his *bons mots* and his philosophical dinners called



#### VOLTAIRE'S EARLY BREAKFAST AT FERNEY

*From a living sketch taken by Denon, July 4th 1775, engraved by Née and Masquelier.*

Voltaire, taken care of by his niece Madame Denis, talks with a visitor; at the foot of his bed his friend Father Adam listens to him, delighted.

"du bout du banc." Voltaire wrote him often from Cirey.—Mlle CLAIRON (died 1803) who made her début at the Comédie in 1743. Voltaire selected her to create some of his great roles, and in consequence had frequent occasions to write her.

The philosophers and men of letters form a third group. Those to whom Voltaire most often wrote were: D'ALEMBERT, DIDEROT, MARMONTEL, DUCLOS, LA HARPE, whom we shall study elsewhere.—ABBÉ DUBOIS (died 1742), against whose historical theories Montesquieu wrote the last two books of *L'Esprit des lois*, but of whose *Réflexions critiques*

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, 680.

sur la poésie et la peinture Voltaire had a high opinion.—The journalist and advocate, LINGUET (died 1763).—The adversary of the philosophers, PALISSOT (died 1814).—ABBÉ TRUBLET (died 1770), a journalist of great talent, whom Voltaire long decried, but ended by reconciling himself with (August 27, 1761).—VAUVENARGUES (died 1747), whose friendship was an honour to Voltaire, and who, if he had not died too early, might have perhaps exercised an excellent moral influence on a man who admired him enthusiastically and devotedly.—We should connect with this group the letters Voltaire wrote to his former masters, the Jesuits: FATHER TOURNEMINE (died 1739), director of the *Journal de Trévoux*; FATHER PORÉE (died 1741), his former professor of rhetoric; FATHER DE LA TOUR (died 1766), principal of Louis-le-Grand, with whom Voltaire was coquetting when he presented himself for the third time to the French Academy.

Among statesmen, great lords, magistrates, should be noted: the MARQUIS D'ARGENSON, Minister for Foreign Affairs (died 1757), with whom VOLTAIRE addressed such a charming letter on the Battle of Fontenoy.—COUNT D'ARGENSON, Minister of War (died 1764); the DUKE DE RICHELIEU (died 1788), his hero, with whom he corresponded familiarly on every subject;—PRÉSIDENT DE BROSSES (died 1777), from whom he rented the county of Tournay, and with whom he had a ridiculous dispute concerning some wood-cutting;—PRÉSIDENT HÉNAULT (died 1770), famous both for his verses and for his *Abrégé chronologique de l'Histoire de France*. Voltaire after having flattered him, twitted him after his conversion (1);—TURGOT (died 1781), the most celebrated economist of the eighteenth century, whose entrance into public affairs Voltaire joyfully saluted;—CARDINAL DE BERNIS (died 1794), who was at first only a charming wit, but became a diplomat, minister and excellent preacher.

But Voltaire also had relations with foreigners: LORD HERVEY, Keeper of the Seals of England (died 1743), whom he had known in London, and to whom he wrote in 1740 a well-known letter under the title of *Siècle de Louis XIV.*;—COUNT DE SCHOUVALOV (died 1798), Chamberlain to the Empress Elisabeth of Russia, from whom he asked information for his *Histoire de Pierre le Grand*;—M. DE SOUMAROKOFF, another great Russian lord;—HORACE WALPOLE (died 1797), whose father and family Voltaire had known in Paris and London;—GOLDONI (died 1793), the famous Italian comic poet, who produced at Paris his *Bourru bienfaisant* in 1771;—MARQUIS SCIPION MAFFEI (died 1755), author of a *Mérope*, etc.

Finally, we find kings and princes among Voltaire's correspondents: FREDERICK II, first as Prince royal of Prussia, later on as king;—CATHERINE II, Empress of Russia, who wrote a very fine letter on Voltaire's death, (1778); the DUCHESS OF SAXE-GOTHA, who entertained him after his return from Berlin, and for whom he wrote the *Annales de l'Empire*;—KING STANISLAS;—the DUCHESS DU MAINE, etc.

This very incomplete list is only given to show to what extent Voltaire's correspondence is instructive with regard to the history of letters, morals, and manners in the eighteenth century. The attentive reading of a selection of well-annotated letters is one which should be most highly recommended to students. Such reading would also reveal to them the real Voltaire: his vivid, nervous, charming, malicious, contradictory character, his infatuations, enthusiasms, hatreds. Finally, Voltaire was never a better writer than in his letters which he scrawled or hastily dictated.

## VI. — VOLTAIRE'S PHILOSOPHY.

1° Voltaire set forth his philosophy in all his writings, verse or prose, and this philosophy may be stated in very few words. The basis of it is a certain

(4) Concerning *Président Hénault*, who deserves a place among XVIII century historians, see M HENRI LION'S study, Paris, Plon, 1905.



distinguished epicurianism; and this is why we must first examine his moral theory.

This moral theory lies in two words: pleasure and well-being. Voltaire thought, like the greater part of his friends whose tendencies he simply formulated, that man has a right to live as he likes, provided he does not annoy his neighbour. His own facility in this respect was extreme; his private life was



"OH MY FRIENDS, LIVE AS GOOD CHRISTIANS  
IT IS DECISION, BELIEVE ME, WHICH MUST BE TAKEN"

From an anonymous print of the end of the XVIII century.

a proof of this, as well as the indulgence he showed in his historical works, his novels, his letters, for what we call bad morals.—From this arose to a great extent (but not altogether) his antipathy for Christianity, which is a constraint.

2<sup>d</sup> But there is another misunderstanding of principle between Voltaire and Christianity, which we do not thoroughly apprehend until we read his commentary on Pascal's *Pensées*. Whoever has not read this, cannot know to what an extent the contradiction is final. Voltaire did not admit that men were miserable, proving his contention by showing that civilisation increased daily, that the streets of Paris were lighted, and there were beautiful carriages in them, etc.

We might think all this mere paradox and jesting, if it were not confirmed in all his other writings.

3° Voltaire also accused Christianity of prolonging fanaticism among men. He was sincere when he preached tolerance, and asked his contemporaries to come to an understanding, in spite of their different beliefs, upon questions of morals and sociability. But, in working towards this understanding, he fell into the error of ridiculing all positive religions, and here his tactics are unskilful. We do not lead men to mutual tolerance by writing commentaries on the Bible; and all these pamphlets which the patriarch of Ferney circulated against the practice and the ceremonies of religion, could only serve to weaken faith without substituting anything in its place. What was for a long time called the *esprit voltairien* — of which M. Homais, in *Mme Bovary*, is the sublime incarnation, and which consists in treating all people who possess a religion as fools and hypocrites — has now gone altogether out of fashion. Religion has its adversaries; but the scientific and historical spirit can no longer tolerate the low jests of Voltaire.

4° Voltaire believed in progress, and wished to promote it by every possible means; it is in this respect that he was the most serious auxiliary to the encyclopædic school. If he too often saw progress merely in material acquisitions, if to comfort and individual independence he sacrificed benefits which were precious in another way, still he must be highly praised for having demanded, and paved the way for the abolition of torture, of the sale of offices, of oppressive censorship, and the reform of criminal procedure, etc. It was in this way that he forestalled the Revolution. In vain is it objected that he was an aristocrat, a courtier, and that he wrote some odious sentences about the people; it is none the less true that the best reforms achieved between 1789 and 1790 arose from the movement of public opinion which his writings, after those of Montesquieu, represented and indefatigably propagated.

5° And finally, as a philosopher did Voltaire have ideas and a system of metaphysics? He was the chief of the sensualistic school, represented by Condillac. — He believed in God, he was a deist, not an atheist; but he expressed this belief in forms so various as sometimes to make it appear to be adoration, sometimes a "mesure de police". It was absolutely impossible for him to be respectful. The Deity Himself, concerning whom he has written such fine pages in his *Dictionnaire philosophique*, was sometimes exposed to his inconsequent trifling. He believed in the immortality of the soul and in a future life, but only vaguely, and here too we find contradictions.

In short, it is difficult to state Voltaire's philosophy in a few words; it seems to us now to consist of moral and civic liberty, the material progress of society, tolerance and deism. Reduced to this formula it has some fine points, as well as insufficient and disquieting ones. Voltaire can never be entirely justified in having worked for the propagation of his own ideas by attacking those

of others, for having substituted intolerance for dogmatism, and for having cast in a frivolous and mocking form discussions upon such grave subjects (4).

## VII. — VOLTAIRE'S STYLE.

We have already referred to Voltaire's style in connection with his various works, and it will suffice to sum up its general characteristics. As a writer of lighter poetry Voltaire has facility, grace and terseness. His dominant quality is clarity, but a luminous and penetrating clarity, which is a joy to the mind. His syntax is so easy and so varied that the reader cannot imagine him expressing himself otherwise; the form adapts itself spontaneously to the thought. His vocabulary, without being very rich, expresses every nuance, and is exquisitely apt. Of all French writers of discursive style it is Voltaire who gives the greatest impression of naturalness. There is not one whom we can read longer without fatigue.

But we should not rank him with Pascal or Bossuet. He did not, like them, "fill all space", ranging from the most naive familiarity to the sublime. In reading Voltaire, we are never ravished with delight as we are when reading the *Pensées* or the *Sermons*.

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(1) Regarding Voltaire's *philosophy*, see G. LANSON, *Voltaire*, p. 162;—F. FAGUET, *Dix-huitième siècle*;—L. CROUSLÉ, Chapter on Voltaire in *La Littérature française* de Julléville-Colin, vol. VI;—F. HÉMON, *Cours de littérature*;—Voltaire, p. 37;—G. PELLISSIER, *Voltaire philosophe*, Colin, 1907.





THE COFFEE

Composition designed by Gravelot and engraved by Bacheley.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE SALONS. — THE ENCYCLOPÉDIE. — BUFFON.

#### SUMMARY

1° **THE SALONS** in the middle of the eighteenth century were more philosophical than literary.—**Mme Geoffrin**, from 1749 to 1777, received artists, writers and celebrated foreigners; sympathising with the encyclopædists, she was however very prudent, and frequently moderated the conversation of her guests.—**Mme du Deffand**, from 1740 to 1780, opened her salon to the aristocracy and men of letters; she was bored nevertheless; her correspondence reveals a mind which was original to the point of paradox.—**Mlle de Lespinasse**, as first reader to Mme du Deffand, formed, from 1764, 1776, a dissenting salon, where d'Alembert struck the boldest philosophical note.—The salons wielded especially a social and **Encyclopædic** influence; but they helped to introduce frivolity into the most serious questions.

2° The **ENCYCLOPÉDIE** is a dictionary which was published from 1751 to 1772. Though several times interrupted, it was at last finished, thanks to powerful protectors and to the courage of Diderot. D'Alembert composed the *Discours préliminaire*; Diderot enrolled the contributors, and he himself worked on a great number of articles.—The characteristic spirit of the *Encyclopédie* is: denial of authority and tradition, confidence in progress, defense of political and intellectual liberty.

3° **BUFFON** (1707-1788) wrote his *Histoire naturelle* and the *Époques de la Nature* from 1749 to 1788. In the *Jardin du Roi* at Paris (now the "Jardin



des Plantes"), of which he was curator, and in his château at Montbard, he collected numerous documents. He is especially remarkable for his **syntheses** and **hypotheses**, in which he forestalled the great modern discoveries. He used the work of collaborators in the **descriptive parts**, which are now the best known, though they are the least characteristic.—He delivered a *Discours sur le style* in the French Academy (1753). As a writer, he is sometimes so noble as to border on pomposity; but he understood the art of **composition**, and often attained true grandeur, and real poetry.



DECORATED LETTER  
of the XVIII century.

s we have already said in our general survey of the eighteenth century, philosophy was no longer a lofty and solitary speciality, but the collective work, and, in a fashion, the passionate enjoyment of all society. Eighteenth century philosophers were publicists, journalists, men of fashion, and women. Their doctrines were prepared and discussed at table or in conversations, and were propagated by letters, pamphlets and dictionaries; and they formulated these doctrines in such vivid and easy forms as must have contributed to their popularisation. As ideas became more bold, their style of expression became proportionately flippant.

We shall examine, therefore, in this chapter, the principal Salons "which were philosophical centres"; the *Encyclopédie*, especially its two directors, d'Alembert and Diderot: and finally, Buffon, who, certainly, was not a "philosopher", and only cared for science, but who was, in spite of himself, associated with the same movement.

## I. — THE SALONS.

**General Characteristics.** — We must draw a distinction between the salons of the eighteenth and those of the seventeenth century: in those of Mme de Rambouillet, Mlle de Scudéry, Mme de Sablé, Mme de La Fayette, the talk was of literature and morality; they made literary portraits or maxims; they read aloud new works. Society at the Temple, or in the house of the Vendômes, was, during the last years of Louis XIV's reign, and under the Regency, a regular centre of free-thinking. But in these salons writers were simply ranked as intellectuals, bold to the point of license, and often scorned. As to the first salons of the eighteenth century—those of the Duchess du Maine, Mme de Lambert, Mme de Tencin, they were merely, the first two at least, "bureaux d'esprit", and, as we have already said, represented the transition from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, properly so called.

We now come to those salons in which men of letters, as philosophers, held first place, and where the ruling ideas of the century were formulated.

**MME GEOFFRIN (1699-1777).**— Mme Geoffrin, whose husband had made an immense fortune as administrator of the Ice Company, was only a "bourgeoise". But, by her practical intelligence, her tact and generosity, she created a salon which, from 1749 until her death, was frequented by the most illustrious writers, by philosophers of the Encyclopædic party, and by famous artists; there was not one foreigner of distinction, were he a prince, who did not esteem it an honour to be presented there.—On Mondays, Mme Geoffrin gave a dinner to artists: the habitués were the painters Vanloo, Vernet, Boucher; the pastel painter Latour; the architect Soufflot; the sculptor Falconet; and M. de Caylus, a distinguished archæologist and a semi-official "superintendent of fine arts, and others. On Wednesdays, she received literary people and savants—all those whom we shall mention in connection with the *Encyclopédie*.—Among foreigners whom she attracted to her salon, may be noted: Abbé Galiani, secretary of the Neapolitan embassy to Paris, one of sparkling wits of the day, and who, when he returned to his own country, wrote the most brilliant letters to his old friends at Paris; Horace Walpole, who was worshipped by Mme du Deffand; the English historian Gibbon, etc. Mme Geoffrin harboured the young Prince Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski, and cared for him like a "maman". When Stanislas was elected King of Poland in 1764, she journeyed to Warsaw, and her letters show how ravished she was with the reception which awaited her. She was also received at Vienna by Joseph II and Maria Theresa. Their daughter, Marie-Antoinette, did not forget her when she had become Queen of France, and Mme Geoffrin, ignored by the court until then, was presented to the Queen.

Favouring the philosophical movement so far as to subsidise the *Encyclopédie* with a large sum of money, but at the same time very prudent, Mme Geoffrin used all her ingenuity to guide and moderate the conversation of her guests. If someone went too far, she would stop him with a "*Voilà qui est bien*", and turn the conversation.—Her letters to Stanislas are curious testimony to this admixture of boldness and timidity (1).

**MME DU DEFFAND (1697-1780).**— Mme du Deffand, though bored all her life, was the wittiest woman of her day, whose correspondence may even now be read with the liveliest interest, and who assembled in her salon, between 1740 and 1780, all the most illustrious men of the period. Established at first in the rue de Beaune, then in the rue Saint-Dominique, she did not make her

(1) See Mme Geoffrin's Letters quoted by M. LANSON, *Choix de lettres du dix-huitième siècle*, p. 414), especially the one, *Sur la statue de Voltaire*.

salon a "boutique de philosophes"; but she admitted, beside people of her own rank, a few great writers and savants. Fontenelle, Montesquieu, Président Hénault, Marmontel, Turgot, Condorcet, La Harpe, Sedaine, and Marivaux were among her guests. D'Alembert, still young but already an illustrious geometriician, inspired her with a sort of passion, and it was she who brought about his reception by the French Academy.

Becoming blind in 1752, Mme du Deffand had taken for reader Mlle de Lespinasse. We shall see how the latter abducted some of her guests from her, especially d'Alembert. Towards the end of her life she more and more mistrusted men of letters; and became passionately attached to the young Duchess de Choiseul and to Horace Walpole.

Her very large correspondence shows us first her incurable ennui, then her original literary tastes (see her letter on Shakespeare) (1), her very independent judgments on the most celebrated of her contemporaries, such as J.-J. Rousseau (2), and also the evolution of a soul which passed from critical dryness to exalted sensibility. In this respect Mme du Deffand perfectly represents the two epochs of the eighteenth century (3).



MADAME DU DEFFAND, IN HER DRAWING-ROOM  
From her portrait by Carmontelle (1717-1806), engraved by Forshel.

**Mlle de Lespinasse** (1732-1776). — We have said that Mme du Deffand, becoming blind, took Mlle de Lespinasse as *dame de compagnie*. This lady soon acquired, in the salon of the rue Saint-Dominique, great influence. Charm-

(1) Quoted by M. G. LANSON, p. 389.

(2) *Id.*, p. 393.

(3) As to Mme du Deffand's salon, see HENRI LION, *Le Président Hénault*, Plon, 1903. (1st part, chaps. 2 and 5).

ed by her intelligence and breadth of mind, Mme du Deffand's guests would linger to talk with Mlle de Lespinasse in her room before entering the salon of the mistress of the house. For some time, Mme du Deffand was ignorant of this because she turned day into night and slept until four o'clock in the afternoon. When she became aware of it, she immediately discharged her reader, who went and established herself a short distance away in the same street, taking with her d'Alembert and a large number of friends. This new salon (1764) was more "philosophical" than the other. The Encyclopædists felt themselves more at ease there, for Mlle de Lespinasse was altogether without prejudice. "D'Alembert dominated here, and through him, the narrowest clique policy. The circumstances under which Mlle de Lespinasse's salon made its début caused her to be regarded as the muse of the *Encyclopédie*, and of militant philosophy" (1).

We should also note the salons of d'**Holbach** (died 1789), and of **Helvétius** (died 1774), both of them "synagogues of the Philosophical Church", according to Grimm's expression. When Mme Helvétius had lost her husband, she continued to receive, in her house at Auteuil, the philosophers of the Encyclopædic school (2). There was also the salon **Mme Necker** (died 1794), more moderate, but still in the vanguard of progress; of **Mme d'Épinay** (died 1783), where Grimm held the same place as d'Alembert in the salon of Mlle de Lespinasse, and others.

**Literary and Philosophical Influence of the Salons.** — In a society where intellect was everything, the salon coteries were necessarily all powerful. They were responsible for certain literary reputations which to us seem almost inexplicable. The fame of the mediocre Marmontel, the insipid Saint-Lambert, the bombastic Thomas, the poetaster Delille, and many others, were thus made. They knew how to converse, and how to read their works. Others, like Duclos, Rivarol, Chamfort, Suard, Garat, the Prince de Ligne, who was witty and learned men, enjoyed in their lifetime a position far superior to that of certain writers of genius; they were the arbiters of taste, and their wit made them sought after or feared by everybody. Each salon had its academician, and all were rivals for seats in the Academy, so that, when there was an election, it was preceded by a preparation contest among all the fashionable feminine wielders of influence. Even the more serious literature was tainted by this spirit of frivolity and *préciosité*. If Montesquieu "made *bons mots* about the laws", it was because he was obliged to please the society and the salons of his time. Rousseau escaped this tutelage; he had sufficient genius and eloquence to disdain such suffrage, and dominate it by contradiction. And it was fortunate

(1) L. BRUNEL, *Histoire de la littérature française*, Julleville-Colin, vol. VI, p. 418). Cf. LANSON, *Choix de lettres du dix-huitième siècle*, p. 355.

(2) See A. GUILLOIS, *Le Salon de Mme Helvétius*, Paris, Lévy.





Le  
Madame la Comtesse

Concert.  
de Saint-Philippe

A DRAWING-ROOM AT THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF LOUIS XVI  
The Concert.

From a drawing by Eugénie de Saint-Aubin (1736-1807) engraved by A.-J. Duclos.

that Voltaire lived at Cirey and Ferney, as, too anxious to please, he would have lost in the salons the best part of his natural gifts.

Philosophy, since it had become a sort of elegant epicurianism, since it had forsworn metaphysics and morality to work only for the amelioration of life by progress, found in fashionable conversation its most favourable atmosphere. The art of jesting about serious things, of considering only appearances, of breaking down traditions and institutions without troubling oneself how to replace them, all this had its birth and development in the salons. It was there that the French nobility amused itself, in company with the "gens de lettres", by self-mockery, and the loss of its loyalty and faith, without abandoning either its privileges or its vices.

## II. — THE ENCYCLOPÉDIE (1751-1772.)

**History of its Publication.** — The word Encyclopædia comes from two Greek words which signify "cercle or cycle of human knowledge". — In 1745, the bookseller Le Breton wished to have translated an Encyclopædia of sciences and arts published in London, in 1727, by Chambers. But he found that the work was in many respects already behind the times, and that it would be wiser to undertake another, entirely new. For this work he commissioned, first Abbé de Malves, then Diderot and d'Alembert.

These writers divided the work among themselves and invited collaborators. In 1750 Diderot published a prospectus, explaining the object of the undertaking, and the terms of subscription (1). In 1751 the *Discours préliminaire* appeared, in which d'Alembert surveyed the progress of the human mind, and made a general classification of sciences. The government seemed as much inclined as the public to favour a *dictionnaire* of such undisputable utility; but after the appearance of the second volume in October, 1751, the work was suddenly prohibited. One of the collaborators on the *Encyclopédie*, Abbé de Prades, who had been charged with the theological articles, had raised a scandal at the Sorbonne by his licentiate's thesis; and this resulted in an investigation and in the suspension of the work. — Thanks to the intervention of Count d'Argenson, the interdiction was recalled; but three censors were appointed to examine the articles in manuscript. Between 1752 and 1757, all went well, and volumes III to VII appeared regularly. — In 1757, there was another crisis. People were overexcited by political events — at home, the Damiens outrage, abroad, the battle of Rosbach. D'Alembert had aroused controversy by his article on Geneva (see J.-J. Rousseau). Pamphlets rained on the *Encyclopédie*, and two

(1) The work was to cost 280 francs; but the number of volumes having been increased, a supplementary price of 20 francs a volume was asked, which raised the cost to 956 francs. From the beginning there had been 5 000 subscribers. — The profits of the enterprise were considerable, as the collaborators were paid very little or not paid at all. (Cf. BRUNEL, *Littérature*, Jullienne-Colin. vol. VI, chapter VII; — and F. HÉMON, *Cours de littérature*, L'Encyclopédie).



THE CONTRIBUTORS TO THE ENCYCLOPEDIA GROUPED AROUND D'ALEMBERT AND DIDEROT  
 Voltaire, Rousseau, Daubenton, Lamarck, Monge, Condorcet, Dumarsais, Buffon, Necker, Vieq  
 d'Azyr, Thoriet, Roland de la Platière, Marmontel, Gaillard, etc

From a print of the time of Louis XVI.



years thus passed during which it seemed improbable that the work could be carried out; so the prudent d'Alembert retired from the enterprise.

Meanwhile, the government feared that the *Encyclopédie* might be printed abroad; and demands were made by subscribers, who were very numerous and influential. It was then they hit upon one of those clever stratagems which tempered, under the old régime, the rigour of the laws. It was agreed that the volumes should continue to be printed at Paris, but that the title page should be marked "Neuchâtel" (as if they had been printed in Switzerland), and that they should then be sent to the provinces, and returned again to Paris bearing the stamp of sale (1). Thanks to this fiction, which deceived nobody, but which "by dodging the law, respected it," the *Encyclopédie* was completed in 1772, and consisted of seventeen volumes of text, four supplementary volumes, and eleven volumes of plates.

We must now return to the directors and collaborators of the *Encyclopédie*.

**D'ALEMBERT** (1717-1783). — D'Alembert was a foundling picked up on the steps of the church of Saint-Jean-le-Rond by the wife of a glazier, Mme Rousseau, in whose house he lodged until he was fifty years old. He received an excellent education at the Mazarin college; and at the age of twenty-six was a member of the Academy of Sciences, his discoveries having revealed him as a mathematical genius of the first order, which his most violent adversaries have never contested. Of a playful and charming disposition, a better talker even than he was a writer, he was welcomed in the fashionable salons, and thanks to the influence of Mme du Deffand, was received into the French Academy in 1754, becoming in time perpetual secretary. It was during his occupancy of this office that he wrote his *Éloges* which are now very little read, and are written in a dry or affected style, but which his contemporaries enjoyed for their allusions. "He seemed to praise the dead only for the opportunity of satirising the living."

He published several scientific works, the *Traité de dynamique*, 1743, *Traité de l'équilibre et du mouvement des fluides*, 1744, etc.; some philosophical writings, *Essai sur les éléments de philosophie*, 1759; polemical memoirs, *De la destruction des Jésuites*, 1765; and some *Mélanges de littérature, de philosophie et d'histoire* (1752-1763). But his celebrity rests mainly upon his collaboration in the *Encyclopédie* from 1751 to 1759. Besides the *Discours préliminaire*, which is in itself a veritable work, he was commissioned with the revision of all the articles on mathematics. Less active, impetuous and enthusiastic than Diderot, he gave the *Encyclopédie* the benefit of his high academic, scientific and social position. His retirement in 1759, after the persecutions narrated above, very nearly compromised the enterprise.

(1) The volumes printed at Paris had to be accompanied by the *privilege du roi*, delivered by the censors; while foreign works were more briefly examined, and could be circulated with the stamp of sale.



Of finer fibre and more dignified than Voltaire, d'Alembert had refused the advances of Frederick II, who wished to attract him to Berlin, as well as those of Catherine II, who would have confided to him the education of the grand duke Paul. But, in spite, of his distinguished bearing, d'Alembert was less attractive than that madman of a Diderot or even Voltaire himself. He had the most narrow and intolerant hatred of religion to the point of fanaticism. His correspondence with Voltaire shows his true fashion of thinking, which, however, he could tone down more or less in practice (1).

### DIDEROT (1713-1784).

— Compared with d'Alembert, Diderot was what is called a Bohemian, physically, morally and intellectually. But he was so frank, so spontaneous, and often so unconscious, that we forgive him many follies. Furthermore, and this is his true claim to our admiration, he never calculated the consequences to personal comfort or worldly consideration of his actions or of his writings. He devoted himself, body and soul, to the *Encyclopédie*, and almost died of his labours.

He was the son of a cutler of Langres, and always preserved a touching affection for his father. Intended for the priesthood, then an attorneys clerk and half-starved tutor, he married a laundress, lived by an all sorts of means, literary or scientific, and by translations, pamphlet writing, by *Essai sur la vertu*, and by licentious novels. A passionate but indiscreet friend; enthusiastic about everything, arts, letters, poetry, archæology, mechanics; endowed with a prodigious memory, capable of working day and night—no matter if he threw away and forgot what



DIDEROT

From his portrait by Michel Vanloo (1707-1771),  
engraved by Henriquez.

(1) G. LANSON, *Choix de lettres du dix-huitième siècle*, p. 226.

he had written—Diderot was one of the most singular of literary temperaments. He was a false note in the cold, geometrical, elegant and calculating eighteenth century, and only Rousseau may be compared with him.

In philosophy Diderot had the most contradictory opinions. Taking him all in all, he appears to have been inclined to materialism, and he foresaw positivism and transformism. But he was an enthusiastic atheist. He wrote vibrating pages about virtue, beauty, love.

Director and editor-in chief of the *Encyclopédie*, Diderot had taken his task altogether seriously. He wrote articles on history, philosophy, and especially on the applied sciences. He went into the workshops with the workmen; had models for machines made, or if necessary made them himself, in order to explain their mechanism exactly, or with a view to the plates in the last volumes. In addition, he superintended everything, filled every office, sought out collaborators and distributed their tasks. In his correspondence with Mlle Volland, and in his letters to Le Breton, the publisher, we can follow the phases of his overwhelming labour (1).

He never ceased, besides, to write on other subjects. For his friend Grimm's "Correspondance" (with various German courts), he wrote accounts of the art exhibitions. His art criticism has been the subjects of much discussion. It is plainly too literary, and not sufficiently technical. But we should remember that his descriptions of pictures seemed necessary for readers at a distance, who could not see the originals, and that their desire to see them was increased by Diderot's work. These "Salons" were not published until after his death. — His other works: *Jacques le Fataliste*, *Le Neveu de Rameau* (2), *Le Paradoxe sur le comédien* (3) were also not printed until the end of the eighteenth century or the beginning of the nineteenth (4).

**OTHER COLLABORATORS IN THE ENCYCLOPÉDIE.** — We shall mention only the principal ones: Philosophy: **Condillac** (died 1780), a cold and skilful logician, the representative of sensationalism; **Helvétius** (died 1771), more plainly materialistic. — Theology: **Abbé Morellet** (died 1814), and several other abbés more or less in trouble with the Sorbonne. — Natural History: **Daubenton** (died 1800), one of Buffon's collaborators. — Chemistry: **Baron d'Holbach** (died 1789), author of the *Système de la nature*, a positivist. — Political Economy: **Turgot** (died 1781) and **Quesnay** (died 1774). — Grammar: **DUMARSAIS** (died 1756), whose educational works were long celebrated. — Literature: **Marmontel** (died 1799), who gathered together his articles in the

(1) Cf. LANSON, *Choix de lettres du dix-huitième siècle*, p. 265, and *Extraits de Diderot*, by E. FALLEX, Delagrave — Cf. *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 682.

(2) As to Diderot, dramatic author, cf. p. 664.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 684.

(4) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 311.

*Encyclopédie* to form his work, *Éléments de littérature*. — Voltaire contributed several articles on *Élégance*, *Éloquence*, *Esprit*, *Imagination*. — Montesquieu wrote the article on *Goût*. — Finally, let us not forget the factotum of the “shop,” Chevalier **de Jaucourt**, who worked on all the subjects, supplied all that was lacking, and devoted his life and his fortune to the *Encyclopédie*.

**Spirit and Influence of the Encyclopédie.** — In reading, without any previous warning, the articles in the *Encyclopédie*, we do not observe the philosophical spirit evoked by the mere mention of its name. To penetrate this spirit, we must notice the perpetual system of references, thanks to which a very orthodox article is refuted by another, also equally inoffensive in appearance. It is then the whole which we must consider, and about which nobody can be deceived. — Denial of authority, of tradition, of faith; positive belief in all that can be seen, touched or made; absolute confidence in progress towards an ideal of political and intellectual liberty — such are the principles set forth and popularised by the *Encyclopédie*. At the end of the century society lived by this ideal, until the time of the reaction brought about by Chateaubriand. We must admit, however, that the encyclopædic spirit hastened certain necessary social reforms, shook off the yoke imposed by certain prejudices, and especially accelerated and popularised the progress of applied science in France. In this last respect, the *Encyclopédie* encouraged curiosity and exactitude.

### III. — BUFFON (1707-1788).

**Biographie.** — Born at the château of Montbard, near Semur, Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon was the son of a councillor to the Bourgogne *Parlement*. Like Bossuet, he was educated by the Jesuits at Dijon, and developed especially a taste for mathematics. In 1730 he began to travel in company with the Duke of Kingston, a young Englishman whom he had known at Dijon, and whose tutor, Hinckmann, was very fond of natural history. After travelling in the west and south of France, Buffon visited Italy, returned through Switzerland, and reached England in 1738. He stayed three months in London, the particular charm of which he felt as Voltaire and Montesquieu had done. He had been elected in 1733, at the age of twenty-six, assistant member of the Academy of Sciences. In 1735 he published a *Statique des végétaux*, after the work of Hales, and in 1740 a *Traité des fluxions*, translated from Newton.

Buffon was then appointed superintendent of the Jardin du Roi (Jardin des Plantes at Paris). It was probably to this circumstance that we owe the *Histoire naturelle*, for Buffon would not have found elsewhere the documents and specimens he needed. Furthermore, this high position brought him information of all kinds from correspondents; and he became the centre of an immense scientific investigation from, which he reaped great profit.

After this, Buffon divided his time between Paris and Montbard. It was at Montbard that he worked the hardest — not in an embroidered coat with lace cuffs, as he was for long absurdly represented — but simply clad, and living in close contact with nature. At five o'clock in the morning he was in his study, which he only left to walk in his magnificent gardens, or to take his meals with his family. He did not care for society. Though he occasionally visited a few salons, he never enjoyed salon conversation, and philosophic arrogance was never to his taste. The Encyclopædists were against him. D'Alembert judged him in a witticism, calling him "le grand phrasier." Marmontel, in his *Mémoires*, drew a more than ill-natured portrait of him. Voltaire said, of the *Histoire Naturelle*, "Pas si naturelle que cela." Nevertheless, Buffon conquered the admiration of all Europe, and in 1753, with no effort on his part, he entered the French Academy. No other event of importance occurred in a life which was devoted, with indomitable perseverance, to the completion of a great work, and which, in its serene tranquillity, was in singular contrast to the agitation of most of his contemporaries. During his lifetime, a statue of Buffon was erected in the Jardin du Roi, bearing the inscription: *Majestati naturæ par ingenium*.

**The "Histoire Naturelle."**— This immense work appeared from 1749 to 1788, Buffon publishing successively: *La Théorie de la terre*, *L'Histoire naturelle de l'homme*, *Les Quadrupèdes*, *Les Oiseaux*, *Les Minéraux*; and separately, *Les Epoques de la nature*. The whole filled 36 volumes. The editions were sold as fast as they were published, and reprinted with corrections. The most important of the posthumous editions is Lacépède's (1796-1823); Buffon completed the *Histoire naturelle* by additions concerning reptiles and fish.

**Method and doctrines of Buffon.** — Buffon, whom our century has finally enshrined, and avenged for all the raillery to which he was subjected, was a great savant, and in many respects a precursor. It must not be thought that his fame is merely due to the literary qualities of his book. No matter what he says of it, too modestly, in his *Discours sur le style*, form is never sufficient to save a scientific work from oblivion. That Buffon is still celebrated, in spite of the magnificent progress of natural history in the nineteenth century, is due to the fact that he was the author of some of those theories and hypotheses of genius without which science would never advance.

Buffon was, first of all, a conscientious, calm and penetrating observer, who worked with documents and specimens. Whether at the Jardin du Roi or at Montbard, he devoted himself to minute investigation. But his genius appeared chiefly in the synthesis of detailed observations, and in the hypotheses which often forestall laws, properly so-called, and suggest them.

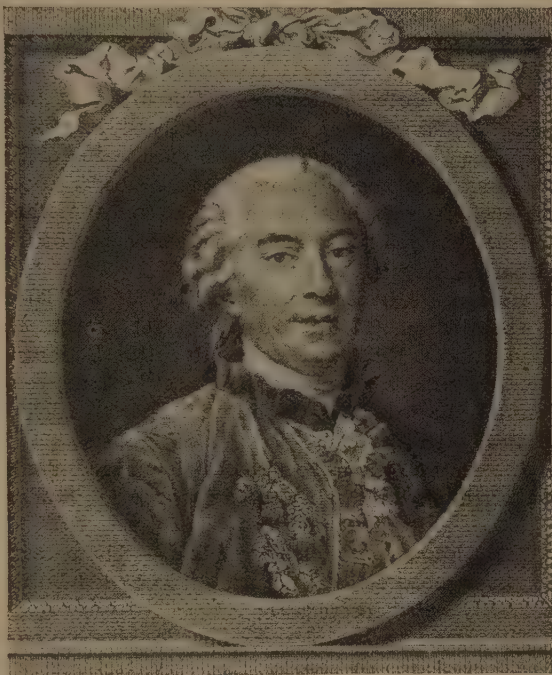
It was by these means that he succeeded in creating, with his powerful ima-



gination always helped by facts, a perfectly coherent system. The earth, detached from the sun, revolves around it ; like all the planets, it is progressively growing colder, and this will continue until some day the world will be in the same condition as the moon. Upon this dead matter, kept in its place by the force of gravity, organic matter has appeared, vegetable and animal. The animal added to the vegetable existence motion and feeling. Intermediate steps formed a passage from mineral to vegetable, from vegetable to animal life. To a certain degree, Buffon upheld the transformists' metamorphosis of types. In his *Théorie de la terre*, his *Discours sur la nature des animaux*, and especially in *Les Époques de la nature*, he draws a masterly picture of the beginning of the world, full of striking visions and of hypotheses some of which have been adopted by contemporary science since the appearance of Cuvier's documents.

But, when he reaches man, Buffon declares that the chain is interrupted. Whatever appearances may be, man is a being apart, the only one capable of thinking, of speaking and of progressing. And from man thus defined and set apart, Buffon reaches the question of the immortality of the soul and of God ; and the study and description of nature confirm him in his idea of a Creator and Divine Providence. It is in this regard that Buffon stands clearly apart from the materialists and sceptics of his time, and also from modern positivists.

The most famous part of the *Histoire naturelle* — and not the least original, but which least honours Buffon as a savant — is the description of quadrupeds and birds, especially the series of "portraits" of the dog, the horse, the ass,



BUFFON IN 1761

From his portrait by Drouais le fils (1727-1775),  
engraved by Chevillet.

the ox, the nightingale, the swan, the humming-bird, which is recalled by the mere mention of Buffon's name. These descriptions are correct, ingenious, useful ; but they deal with the external animal altogether, and are not therefore scientific. Furthermore, they have at times a naïve tendency to moralise, and the animals become examples as they are in the *bestiaires* and the *fables*. But the real Buffon is not here, not only because, in these portraits, he became merely an illustrator of his book, but because as a matter of fact most of them are the work of the various collaborators whom he had gathered around him.

**Buffon's Collaborators.** — The first was Louis Daubenton, a physician, whom Buffon brought from Montbard in 1743, to be demonstrator in the laboratory of natural history in the Jardin du Roi. He commissioned him to write the anatomical descriptions of quadrupeds. Daubenton performed this work in the most conscientious manner. But after the *Histoire des quadrupèdes* was finished, in 1763, he ceased his collaboration, thinking himself too much absorbed in the work of the master.

After him, Guéneau de Montbéliard (1720-1785) worked on the birds.

Abbé Bexon (1748-1784) was a real savant, while Guéneau was a literary man. From 1772, and especially after Guéneau's retirement in 1777, Bexon went on with the work on the birds. To him we owe the too famous descriptions of the swan and the humming-bird, which Buffon retouched in order to simplify them.

For work on the minerals, Buffon engaged Faujas de Saint-Fond (1741-1819), who had also the task of going through Buffon's voluminous correspondence.

**The Discours sur le style** (1753). — The necessity for rendering his thanks to the members of the French Academy led Buffon to write this discourse, incorrectly called *Discours sur le style*.

The circumstances attending Buffon's reception were curious. On the death of the academician Languet de Gergy, archbishop of Sens, the company would have elected Piron, author of a charming comedy, *La Métromanie* ; but Piron had written some licentious verses which injured him at court, and the king, as protector of the Academy, refused in advance to ratify this election. The Academy then chose Buffon, who had neither presented himself, nor made any visit to the Academicians. On August 25, 1753, Buffon delivered his *Discours*, which had a great " succès de salle," confirmed besides by posterity ; and the Academy, out of so many " academic thanks," has scarcely retained any but Buffon's.

Buffon begins this Discourse with a few modest remarks ; then he briefly and discreetly eulogises his predecessor, Languet de Gergy, a virtuous prelate with very little claim to academic honours. At the close he makes the traditional compliments to Seguier, Richelieu, Louis XIV and Louis XV. In this conven-

tional frame, Buffon enshrines “some ideas on style” which may be thus formulated : 1° The necessity for making a plan ; 2° Style is nothing but the order and the movement of thought ; 3° To write well is to think, feel and express well, 4° Things are to be called only by their most general names ; 5° Ideas, discoveries, facts soon belong to everybody, but style is the man himself.

We can but approve, and might easily develop by examples, the first three



THE JARDIN DES PLANTES UNDER LOUIS XVI

From a sketch by Lantara (1729-1778), engraved by Le Bas.

precepts which, on closer view, are but one. Let us note that Buffon separates the role of the intelligence (to think well), from that of the imagination and the heart (to feel), and the craftsmanship (to express well). He is in agreement with the theories of the seventeenth century in subordinating feeling to reason ; and we may always answer him with the remark that the poet, whether he writes in prose or verse, always begins by seeing, feeling and imagining, before reasoning. — As to his fourth point, “to call things only by their most general names, “to understand this, we must consider what Buffon himself wished to accomplish by his works. His greatest merit as a writer, is having introduced the natural sciences into the domain of literature, as Pascal did theology and Montesquieu law. He counsels those who, like himself, set forth theories and discoveries, to render them accessible to everyone by avoid-

ing the technical vocabulary of specialists: This precept, often misunderstood, is not at all intended for poets, novelists or orators, and the general theory as to the superiority of paraphrase cannot be deduced from it. Finally, when Buffon says, *Le style est de l'homme même* (and not according to the well worn misquotation, "Le style, c'est l'homme"), we must not understand by this that our style betrays our character or temperament. Buffon simply says that style (the order and movement we give to our thoughts) is, in a way, our own seal, our signature; it is by its style that a thought belongs to us. If we have known how to find an expression so adequate to the thought that a more felicitous or exact one cannot be found, it must certainly be quoted just as we have expressed it. If not, it is taken away from us, and if better expressed by another, who has known better than we do how to appreciate the relation between the words and the thing, it will be handed down to posterity under his name.

**Buffon as Writer.** — The real Buffon, the writer of the *Histoire de l'homme*, of the *Théories de la terre*, of the *Époques de la nature*, is not without faults. He has a taste for grandiloquence. His magnificent subject inspires him with a sort of respect, and he avoids everything which seems to him too simple.

But he has eminent merits. First, more than any other writer of his time, not excepting Montesquieu, he dominates his subject and organises details, and gives to each part its relative importance. — Furthermore, he has, in spite of his pomposity and sometimes thanks to it, an emotional and eloquent style, worthy of the grandiose pictures he sees like distant visions, and which he knows how to make vivid. We cannot read without admiration the pages in which he shows us the first man in the bosom of primitive nature, awaking as his senses receive impressions; or, in the *Époques de la nature*, the descriptions of barren continents upon which a formidable vegetation appears. Buffon has, truly and in the highest degree, the scientific imagination which is like the poets; it is rightly that he is compared to Pascal and Lucretius.

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A FARMER AT THE FOUNTAIN

From a sepia by J.-B. Huet (1745-1841).

## CHAPTER VI.

### JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU (1712-1778)

#### SUMMARY

1° **J.-J. ROUSSEAU** (1712-1778) received a romantic education, led at first a vagrant life, and settled in Paris, where the success of his *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (1750) brought him renown. He composed his works through all the changes of a troubled existence, filled with great misfortunes and made tragic by the mania of persecution.

2° After his two *Discours* (1750-1755), he wrote the *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles* (1758), a novel in Letters, *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), a political treatise, *Le Contrat social* (1761), an educational treatise, *L'Emile* (1762), *Les Confessions*, in which he recounts his life down to 1766, etc. All these works are animated with the same spirit, and form a whole of remarkable unity.

3° **HIS PHILOSOPHY** may be summed up as follows: Man is good by nature; he is only corrupted by society; progress contributes to the unhappiness of humanity; man needs religion.

4° Rousseau restored eloquence and picturesqueness to style; by his lyricism and his feeling for nature he was the ancestor of the romanticist.

5° **BERNARDIN DE SAINT-PIERRE** (1737-1814) published his *Études* and *Harmonies de la nature*, remarkable for the variety and accuracy of the descriptions, and *Paul et Virginie*, a masterpiece of sensibility and colour. But he was always objective, and, in this respect, differed from Rousseau and Chateaubriand.

## I. — BIOGRAPHY.



DECORATED LETTER  
of the XVIII century.

**Childhood and Youth (1712-1744).**— The Rousseau family, of French origin, had taken refuge in Geneva about the year 1550 to escape the persecution of Protestants, and had acquired citizenship there. The father of Jean-Jacques, Isaac Rousseau, was an intelligent man, but adventurous and lacking both morality and practical sense.

He had first sought his fortune in Constantinople, returning later to set up in his native city as clock-maker. His wife, who came of a clerical family, the Bernards, was somewhat inclined, it appears, to coquetry. She died in giving birth to Jean-Jacques. An elder brother of Jean-Jacques completely unmanageable, disappeared and was never heard of again.

Without giving undue importance to hereditary influences, it may be observed that the child was subjected to conditions quite opposite from stability, method and virtue. (Voltaire had, at least, inherited from his father, the notary, an understanding of practical things and the art "of administering his life.")

Rousseau's education contributed also, and even more, to his perversion. The clock-maker, his father, confided him at first to the care of one of his aunts; and then took upon himself the task of forming the boy by giving him romances and Plutarch's *Lives* to read. Sometimes the father and son read together all night, and towards dawn the elder Rousseau would say: "I am more of a child than thou... Let us go to bed."

When Jean-Jacques was ten years old, his father was obliged to leave Geneva, and left his son with his uncle, M. Bernard, who placed him in the care of a clergyman named Lambercier, at Bossey. There he remained for two years, under better guidance, indeed, but perhaps too late.

Returning to Geneva, Jean-Jacques was apprenticed to an engraver; but he was lazy, and spent much time strolling in the environs of the city, often forgetting the hour at which the gates of Calvin's town were closed. One evening, not daring again to face the punishment he knew awaited him for his tardiness, he fled to Confignon, a Catholic village two leagues from Geneva. The curé, to whom he introduced himself as a would-be convert, sent him to Mme de Warens, who lived at Annecy and worked zealously for the conversion of young Protestants. She directed him to the hospice of the catechumens at Turin. At the end of four months the new Catholic left this hospice, and being obliged to seek his livelihood, became a lackey.

We cannot follow all Rousseau's peregrinations: to Lyons in company with

a musician ; to Fribourg ; to Geneva, where he once more saw his family ; to Berne and other places with a Greek prelate who was collecting funds for the Holy Sepulchre ; and at last to Paris (1). Finding himself penniless, Rousseau returned on foot to his first protectress, Mme de Warens, and again established himself in her home, which was then at Chambéry, and afterwards at her country house, Les Charmettes. It was at Les Charmettes that Rousseau learned to



“ LES CHARMETTES ”

From a water-colouring of the XIX century.

know and love nature. He continued to read and dream, acquiring that power and intensity of feeling which was to become the peculiar characteristic of his genius, and also to disorganise his life. Unfortunately for him, he lived in an atmosphere of romance, in which the most elementary notions of the true and the false, of good and evil, were naïvely ignored.

However, Rousseau could not dawdle along forever at Les Charmettes. In 1740, when he was twenty-eight, he accepted a position as tutor at Lyons, in the family of M. de Mably, brother of the famous philosopher Condillac. But he was not a successful teacher, and at the end of a year, he returned to Les Charmettes, where he stayed only a short time, and in 1741, he left Savoy and

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 324.

Mme de Warens, never to see them again. He went to Paris with fifteen *louis d'or* in his pocket, but with a new system of musical notation which he intended to exhibit to the Academy of Sciences, and by the exploitation of which he hoped to make a fortune.

**Sojourn at Paris and at l'Ermitage (1741-1757).** — When Jean-Jacques reached Paris he was not the bear he was to be at l'Ermitage, nor the misanthrope of Val-Travers, but a young man full of ambition and illusions, determined to advance his fortunes by every possible means, and not in the least disdainful of soliciting all sorts of patronage. The hopes he had founded on his musical notation were disappointed; but he had made the acquaintance of Fontenelle, Diderot, the Marquise de Broglie, and of Mme Dupin, wife of the Farmer-general and mother-in-law of M. de Francueil. Mme de Broglie procured a position for him with M. de Montaigne, who left Paris for the Embassy at Venice in 1743. This was one of Jean-Jacques' most singular adventures. Incapable of living with people of quality, with whom he was always dull and spiritless, or else insolent, he fell out with the ambassador and at the end of a year returned to Paris.

He then began to think seriously of profiting by his knowledge of music. He composed the words and music of an opera, *Les Muses Galantes*, which the financier La Popelinière produced at his own house. The Duke de Richelieu, charmed by this music, commissioned Rousseau to re-write an opera of Rameau. Francueil and Mme Dupin, to whom he had become secretary, presented him to Mme d'Epinay, and this was the time of his greatest social success... He was petted by a society whose corruption he did not yet dream of denouncing, and even his eccentricities were found interesting. At this period he contracted a doubtful marriage with Thérèse Levasseur, a servant at an inn, and this relationship became the torment of his life. Of this union he had five children, whom he successively abandoned to the Foundling Hospital. An action so shameful might be passed over in silence, were it not a duty to point out the deplorable contradictions between the conduct of the man and the declamations of the philosopher (1).

We have said that Rousseau had formed a friendship with Diderot, who had begun to prepare the *Encyclopédie* and was selecting his collaborators. He entrusted the articles on music to Rousseau. In the summer of 1749, while Rousseau was on his way to pay a visit to Diderot, then imprisoned at Vincennes, he read in the journal *Le Mercure* a notice of the subject proposed by the Academy of Dijon ("whether the restoration of sciences and arts has contributed to the purification of morals.") According to Rousseau's own account, he experienced an intense illumination and ecstasy during which, while lying under a tree, he

(1) See M. BRUNEL's, *Notice* at the beginning of his *Extraits de J.-J. Rousseau*, Hachette, XXIII.



discovered the principles of his philosophy, and mentally improvised his *Discours* (4). On the contrary, if we are to believe Diderot, it was he who counselled Rousseau to handle the subject paradoxically. However this may be, Rousseau won, in 1750, the prize offered by the Academy of Dijon, and his *Discours*, which was immediately published, made him famous.

Jean-Jacques, in order to harmonise his life with his principles, now resigned his secretaryship to Mme Dupin and went to live in a garret, where he earned his livelihood by copying music. The society from which he had fled followed him, and it became the fashion to give work to this copyist. He achieved further renown by his opera, *Le Devin du Village*, which was produced at Fontainebleau before the court in 1752, and later at the Paris Opéra. This opera was extremely successful, and Rousseau could have profited by his newly acquired fame to be presented to the king and obtain a pension; but he bound himself by his principles, and remained at home. Meanwhile, he had long wished for a reconciliation with his fellow-citizens at Geneva. He went there in 1754, was received as a great man, and was allowed to worship, according to the Calvinistic faith.

The Academy of Dijon proposed, for 1755, a subject which naturally tempted Rousseau: "The origin of inequality among men." This time he did not obtain the prize, but, when printed, his *Discours* had no less success than its



ROUSSEAU IN INTIMACY

Lithography from a sketch which the painter J. Houel did of J.-J. Rousseau, after having dined with him at Montmorency, in the little house of the Grangery, belonging to the Marshal of Luxembourg, the Sunday of the Octavus of Fête-Dieu, in the year 1764.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 713 (en note).

predecessor. Rousseau dedicated it to his native city and if he had settled there in that year, 1756, Voltaire would not have established himself at Les Délices. Rousseau accepted at that time, from Mme d'Epinay, a pavilion in the forest of Montmorency, called l'Ermitage, not far from the Château de la Chevrete. In this rural retreat he ought to have passed happy and busy days, with nature, peace and material security. Here he commenced his most important works, *l'Emile* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. But his mood became suspicious; he was ill, and his ailments irritated him. His friends, Grimm and Duclos, betrayed him to Mme d'Epinay. Also, the philosophical party generally was opposed to him, and worked against him secretly. Thérèse Levasseur and her mother, who could not bear the country, did their best to embroil Rousseau with Mme d'Epinay. At last, the unfortunate Jean-Jacques conceived an unexpected passion for Mme d'Houdetot, sister-in-law of Mme d'Epinay, and in the opinion of her family he became immediately a most troublesome and indiscreet person. Discord was impending. After several quarrels and reconciliations, the break came definitely on the occasion of a Journey Mme d'Epinay made to Geneva. Thinking to give Rousseau pleasure she had invited him to accompany her. But, seeing in this invitation only a humiliating command, he refused, as he alone knew how to do, in the most offensive manner. Mme d'Epinay, upon the solicitation of Grimm — who seems to have played in all these affairs the role of a spy — asked Rousseau to leave l'Ermitage in December, 1757.

**At Montmorency (1757-1762).** — Jean-Jacques settled in the village of Montmorency in an extremely humble little house. It was there he composed his *Lettre à d'Alembert* on stage-plays. But he was not left to sulk for long in this retreat. Marshal de Luxembourg, Lord of Montmorency, and his wife, made such tactful and intelligent advances to Rousseau that he began to frequent the château, and become acquainted with a society greatly superior, both in rank and intellect, to that of Mme d'Epinay. He even consented, in 1759, to occupy a pavilion of the château, without sacrificing in any way his liberty. He continued to be over-sensitive and sometimes rude, and it required all the tact of his exquisitely accomplished hosts to avoid a rupture. He finished *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, which appeared in 1761, and that same year he published, in Holland, *Le Contrat social*. *L'Emile*, in its turn, was ready in 1762, and, thanks to M. de Malesherbes, was published in Paris. But, hardly had it appeared when the Paris *Parlement* condemned the book to be burned, and demanded the imprisonment of the author. Rousseau, warned in time, left Montmorency in a post-chaise belonging to the Marshal, and travelled to Switzerland.

**Rousseau from 1763-1770.** — A sort of nomadic life now began for the unhappy Rousseau, for which he blamed his enemies, but which, it must be

admitted, was caused chiefly by his own unhealthy state of mind or, to speak frankly, his madness. He lived first at Yverdun in the canton of Vaud, then at Motiers in the Val-Travers on land belonging to the King of Prussia, and there he remained for two years, dressing in Armenian costume. He wrote his *Lettre à M. de Beaumont*, Archbishop of Paris, who had condemned *l'Emile* in one of his charges, and practiced botany. But he got into difficulties with the consistory of Geneva, published his *Lettres de la Montagne*, and was obliged to leave Motiers, where the population had become hostile to him (1764). He took refuge for several months on the island of Saint-Pierre in the Lake of Bienné, and there enjoyed a restorative interval of peace (1). But again he was compelled to leave. Tempted at first to go to Prussia, he preferred accepting the invitation of the English philosopher David Hume; and, after having passed through Paris, where he appeared in his Armenian costume, he embarked for England in 1766. There he soon quarrelled with Hume, in whom he saw nothing but a persecutor, and on May 1, 1767, he left England. After that we find him at the château de Trye, in Normandy, in the home of the Prince de Conti; then at Lyons, then at Monquin, in Dauphiné. At length he returned in 1770, to Paris.



ROUSSEAU'S HUT IN THE DESERT OF ERMENONVILLE  
From a lithography by Thénot (1849).

**Last Years and Death (1770-1778).** — Rousseau now settled in a house in

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 721.

the rue Plâtrière, a street which now bears his name. Here he resumed his occupation of copying music. He was fond of taking long walks in the environs of Paris (1). He went on with his *Confessions*, and also wrote *Les Réveries d'un Promeneur solitaire*.

During his last years he made new friends, and especially found new feminine worshippers. But the mania of persecution had developed in him more intensely than ever, and his health had become seriously affected. One of his admirers, M. de Girardin, brought him on May 20, 1778, to his château at Ermenonville, and there he died on July 2, of an attack of apoplexy. Several days before his death he had expressed the wish to be buried on the Ile des Peupliers in the centre of the park of this château. M. de Girardin fulfilled this wish, and the rustic tomb became a place of pilgrimage for all who had known Rousseau, and who, no longer having to suffer from his singular temper, began to pity and love him. In 1794, his remains were exhumed and placed in the Panthéon beside those of Voltaire. A late investigation has shown that the tombs of these two great men had not been profaned in 1814, as was for a long time believed; the two coffins are intact.

## II. — ROUSSEAU'S WORK.

**Discours sur les sciences et les arts** (1750).—We have just mentioned the circumstances under which this *Discours* was written. If indeed it was Diderot, the man of paradoxes, who furnished Rousseau with this one, he only revealed to the latter the principles to which he was to devote all his works, and sacrifice his life. It is remarkable that Rousseau was thirty-seven when he produced this first work; and it is rare that genius reveals itself so late.—The *Discours* (and the word must again be taken in its Latin sense, *discursus*, an exposition, a dissertation), consists of two parts: the first is an historical exposition, a sequence of examples drawn from Sparta, from Athens, from Rome (here is set down the famous *prosopopœia* of Fabritius) (2), and from modern States; the second is a theoretic and philosophical explanation of the historical law according to which letters and science corrupt morals. Every science, every art, he says, is born of a corresponding vice:—astronomy, of superstition; eloquence, of lying, etc. Artists and savants are lazy men. Reading weakens courage, and perverts the imagination. It is not that Rousseau wishes to turn humanity back into barbarism. He gives homage to great geniuses, and he considers that in the actual condition of society, literature and science have become necessities. But he urges the majority of men to mistrust this seduction, and to try to act well rather than to write well.—But to judge Rousseau's thesis correctly, that is to say as free from the too oratorical enthusiasm of this academic work, written in a style which often exaggerates his thought, we must read also his *Réponse au roi Stanislas*, and his Preface to *Narcisse*.

**Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes** (1755).—This time we do not deal with a "declamation," but a reasoned and truly philosophical work. We feel that the author, now celebrated, no longer troubles himself about the vote of pro-

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 741.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 330.



vincial academicians upon his work, but writes to express his own thoughts.—He begins by sketching an idyllic picture of primitive man, "in a state of nature," a simple and robust being, with nothing but instincts, independent and happy, rejoicing in his own strength, and tempering it with pity. But the thought of progress spoils everything. Men associate in groups, form families, build huts, call themselves masters of the ground they cultivate, and thence arise jealousy, rivalry, anarchy. Then the richest, strongest and most intelligent league themselves against the poor and the weak. Once created, inequality is consecrated by time, by custom, and by the individual's desire to retain his property and rank.—This *discours* is the first modern manifesto of the communistic theory. Rousseau upholds the weak against the oppressor, the subjects against the despot, and him who has nothing against him who possesses;—and all this, not in the name of morality and charity, which indeed demand a juster division of property, and civic equality, but as the result of a sophistical argument founded upon a vision of his over-excited imagination.

### Lettre sur les spectacles

(1758).—D'Alembert had written the article on Geneva for the *Encyclopédie*, inspired, as we have said, by Voltaire! who was then settled at Les Délices. He at first congratulates the ministers of Geneva on having reduced their religion to simple morality, and on being devoted to no dogma. Now, it must not be forgotten that, on

the contrary, the pastors taught dogma from their pulpits, and imposed them upon their faithful followers. It was therefore a singular compliment to make them! In the second place, d'Alembert demanded the establishment of a theatre in Geneva where dramatic representations had been forbidden since Calvin's time. — Concerning the first point, Rousseau is very brief. He contents himself with merely making d'Alem-



A PRINT SYMBOLIZING THE PHILOSOPHIC QUARREL  
OF VOLTAIRE AND ROUSSEAU

bert feel his want of tact. "Monsieur," he says, "let us judge of men's actions, but leave God to judge of their faith."—He hastens on to the second point, the theatre. The thesis is very simple and very logical: he first considers the theatre in itself, and the influence which tragedies or comedies have upon the sentiments of the spectators; then he examines the theatre as a local institution, in the effect it produces with regard to luxury and morals; finally, he applies his preceding conclusions particularly to Geneva.—The first point in the *Lettre* may be compared with all that moralists have written against the theatre, especially the *Maximes* of Bossuet upon drama. Rousseau accuses tragedy of flattering and exciting our passions, and comedy of developing in us the sense of the ridiculous, which is a vice of the heart. He chooses his examples well, but, it must be admitted, less like a critic than like a sophist: tragedies by Crébillon, such as *Catilina* and *Atrée*; Voltaire's *Mahomet*; Corneille's *Médéc*; Racine's *Phèdre*; and later he adds *Bérénice* and *Zaïre* as influencing souls in the weaknesses of love. He teaves aside all Corneille's masterpieces. As to comedies, he reproaches Regnard for making rascality likeable (*Le Légataire universel*); but he is particularly hard upon Molière, especially for *Le Misanthrope*. Upon the latter he builds a syllogism: Alceste is virtuous; now, he is laughed at; therefore, virtue is laughed at. This syllogism is easy to refute, since it is certain that though Alceste is laughed at, it is not his virtue which excites ridicule. The interest of this very brilliant passage lies in the personal accent we feel in it. Alceste is Jean-Jacques; Philinte is Grimm, or Voltaire, or some such enemy of Jean-Jacques. This interpretation of *Le Misanthrope*, we may add, inspired the solemn Fabre d'Églantine to write his *Philinte de Molière*. We must admit, all the same, that Rousseau was not altogether wrong in accusing Molière of making us laugh at the expense of good people; but we have already explained how this method may be viewed.—In the second part, Rousseau is very severe upon actors. He shares and exaggerates the prejudices of his time, and considers that the presence of actors in Geneva would imperil the city's morals. What can be tolerated in a city like Paris, would be pernicious in Geneva. To strengthen his thesis, and make it more impressive, he asks what would become, for example, of the happy and virtuous Montagnons (who lived in the neighbourhood of Neuchâtel), whose simple, laborious, patriarchal life inspires a few ravishing pages, if a theatre were established among them.—In the third part, he is more precise, and studies the probable effects of the theatre upon the Genevans, from the point of view of family relations, of wealth, and morals. Must all distraction, he asks at the close, be refused, then, to a people? No. But these diversions should be civic or military fêtes, country balls, where eligible young people dance under the eyes of their parents, and ceremonies where the most virtuous young girl should be crowned. Rousseau finishes his letter in a tone of emotional eloquence.

**La Nouvelle Héloïse** (1761).—The heroine of the novel, Julie d'Étanges, loves her tutor, Saint-Preux. But Julie is compelled to marry M. de Volmar. Her old love causes her to suffer, while she faithfully fulfils her duties as a wife and mother. Her husband, to whom she confesses her passion for Saint-Preux, recalls the latter, who had taken a journey in order to forget Julie, and establishes him in his own home, to show his confidence in the virtue of his wife and his friend. Julie soon dies of an illness contracted while saving one of her children.—This novel is written in letters from Saint-Preux to Julie, from Julie to Saint-Preux, from Claire d'Orbe to her cousin Julie, from Lord Edouard Boston to Saint-Preux, from M. de Volmar, etc. It seems to us now desperately slow, and only a few pages interest us: the sketch of Parisian society by Saint-Preux (second part), which is Rousseau's judgment upon the salons, the theatres, etc.; and several philosophical passages on suicide (third part). But the descriptions have retained their freshness and beauty: the mountains of the Valais (1st part), the

famous promenade to the rocks of Meillerie and on Lake Geneva (3rd part); the gardens (4th part) (1); the vintage at Clarens (5th part). These magnificent pages contain all that romanticism was soon to sing in rhythm. Chateaubriand and Lamartine (see *Le Lac*) are evolved from them, as well as the novels of Mme de Staël and George Sand. But very different pages were preferred by Rousseau's contemporaries: the animated and often grandiloquent painting of unfortunate love, an excited and tearful sensibility, dissertations on all sorts of political, religious, philanthropical, pedagogical subjects, etc.



#### THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF MATERNAL EDUCATION

*From a composition by Borel, engraved by Voysard (1784).*

Rousseau himself "a sensible Philosopher points out to Charity the things on which she should pour her gifts. Comedy, under the touch of Figaro, olds big sacks. She scatters the contents of one at the feet of several mothers who give their milk to their " children. Above Philosophy is the statue of Humanity, bearing the words " HELP FOR NURSING MOTHERS "

In this respect, the prodigious success of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* is a document upon the taste—and sometimes the worst taste,—of the eighteenth century in 1761. Yet it must be recognised that this way of analysing passions, by taking them seriously to the point of ridiculous sentimentality, was preferable to the cold free-thinking, the non-morality as we say nowadays, of the greater part of novels then fashionable.

**Le Contrat social** (1761).—Rousseau demonstrates that nobody has the right to give up his moral or civic liberty for the profit of anybody else. He condemns, then, all monarchical or aristocratic government. But man will renounce his liberty for the

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p, 726:



benefit of the community : " Each one giving himself to all, gives himself to no one; and as there is not one associate upon whom one does not acquire the same right as upon oneself, one gains the equivalent of all that one loses, and more strength to retain what one has." Thus we reach the conception of an abstract and absolute power : the State. To realize the danger of such a doctrine, it is sufficient to remember that *Le Contrat social* was highly approved by the Jacobins. It is useful to compare the experimental politics of Montesquieu with this utopia of an unhealthy imagination. But *Le Contrat social* has singular literary beauty, composed of implacable logic and direct force. The same hand which had written the delicate and impassioned analyses, the ravishing, enthusiastic, highly coloured descriptions of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, engraved, so to speak, in a lapidary style, these incisive formulas, these paradoxes of visionary politics.

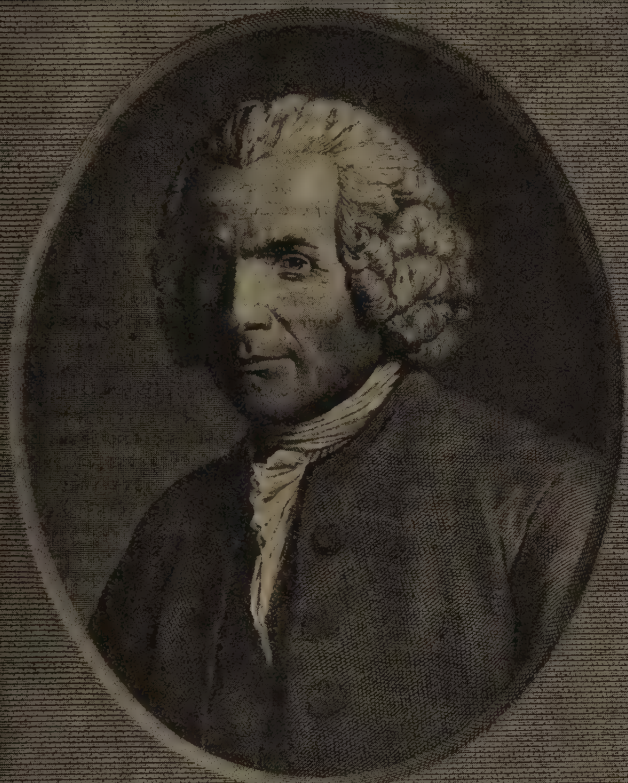
**L'Émile** (1762). — The *Émile* is Rousseau's masterpiece, not only because it is the most varied and suggestive of all his writings, but because it contains all of Rousseau himself. The *Discours*, the *Lettre sur les spectacles*, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, *Le Contrat social* were all like preparatory steps towards the *Emile*. Rousseau had set down the principle that man is good by nature, and corrupted by civilisation. But how are we to cure a society so deeply tainted that it loves evil and does not wish to correct it? Such a work should be begun at the beginning, by the education of children; and this time Rousseau put his problem well. Until then, all that he had written was declamatory or utopian; but to establish a pedagogical system was a practical idea. However we shall see utopia slip in again.

*Émile* consists of five books : I. Early infancy. Rousseau thinks that the mother herself should suckle her child. He protests against the custom of swaddling children. The tutor, who is to take charge of young Emile, watches his very earliest impressions and sensations; he takes care that he does not acquire any bad habits.—II. Here begins the real role of the tutor, and Rousseau understands this role quite differently from the usual idea. A teacher generally prepares a child to live in society, arming him by instruction and education to live a social life. But Jean-Jacques believes Society to be corrupted and living by its corruption, so the role of the master should be chiefly negative, and should consist in preserving the child, or the young man, from society. The child should be reared in the country, " far from valets, the last of mankind, after their masters." The tutor should not leave him, but would let him, as far as possible, learn by himself. He must not be forced to do anything, but must be made to feel that, by reason of his weakness and ignorance, he is at the mercy of his elders. No moral studies, no reading (1), no written exercises, but conversation, prepared experiments and incessant object lessons. The conception of property Emile will acquire by a discussion with the gardener Robert (it is necessary that the latter should not have read either the *Discours sur l'inégalité*, or the *Contrat social*). If he breaks the windows in his room in a fit of temper, say nothing; he will be cold in the night, and will realise his foolishness, (but if they are your windows he has broken? In short, let nature act; your part should be limited to creating occasions. " It is impossible that children should become disobedient, wicked, lying, covetous, unless the vices which make them so have been planted in their hearts." What a pity that Jean-Jacques did not keep one of his five children in order to judge of the truth of this precept! Excellent ideas follow on how to learn geography, history, geometry; on the way to exercise the sight, the hearing, the voice. Physical training fills a large place in the second book : Emile, who has learned to walk alone in a meadow, has running and swimming exercises and various games. He is always barefooted, with no hat; he wears light-coloured clothes, and sleeps on a hard bed.

His food is simple and abundant, and includes very little meat. At twelve years

(1) Here occurs the famous passage on LA FONTAINE's *Fables*. See extracts by M. L. Brunel.





J. J. ROUSSEAU.

PORTRAIT OF ROUSSEAU IN HIS OLD AGE  
From the print by Pierre-Gabriel Langlois (1750-1810).

he is a strong and healthy child, a "fine animal." (1) — III. In the third book we reach the training of the mind. Object lessons are continued, but have more breadth and significance; books are still distrusted. Emile reads only *Robinson Crusoe*, an example of human energy, and natural. The tutor will draw all his examples from nature. He will teach the boy astronomy, a little physics, etc., by showing him the rising and setting of the sun, and compelling him to reason about whatever astonishes him. But, even though the young man is rich, Rousseau thinks he should be armed against the fickleness of fortune, and should be capable, if necessary, of earning his living. Emile will be taught, therefore, a manual craft, that of a joiner (2). — IV. Emile is now sixteen, and his moral and sensual life awakes. The tutor will profit by this youthful crisis to take him into society, where he will try to fill his heart with sensations of pity, charity, and the joys of an always pure conscience. Then comes the moment when he must be given a religion. Here we find the famous *Profession de foi du Vicaire savoyard*. Rousseau supposes that the vicar takes his pupil up a mountain, from which there is a magnificent view of the valley of the Pô. The vicar (in whom Rousseau has incarnated, according to the *Confessions*, two priests he had known, Abbé Gaime and Abbé Gâtier), while this spectacle inclines Emile to meditation and adoration, expounds the principles of natural religion. It is conventional reasoning, often abstract and metaphysical, and very coherent, the proof lying in the argument from final causes and almost in the categorical imperative of Kant and which results more or less in a Christian formula. This celebrated passage, full of lofty thought, and written in a style both powerful and picturesque, carries us far indeed from the persiflage of Voltaire. It is a rationalism which begins to be troubled by negations, which examines itself, and lets the Deity "speak to its heart." Its success was enormous, and it brought back, if not to religion, at least to something like it, many souls who "sought, lamenting." — Emile can now face society alone; his physical and moral health prevent any liability to contagion. But Rousseau wishes him to consider the country as the necessary place in which to satisfy his natural tastes and to sustain his virtue. He sketches, then, the "plan of life for a rich man," which is one of the most enchanting passages in the book (3). — V. Finally, it is time that Emile should marry. A young girl, Sophie, has been reared on the same principles as Emile. They meet, love and marry; and the tutor remains in their home in order to rear their children. In this Book V occurs the celebrated passage on *Voyages à pied* (4).

This brief analysis is enough to show the strength and the weakness of the system. Rousseau is right in protesting against the abuse of constraint in moral training, and of parrot-like memorising of lessons. He is in agreement with Rabelais and Montaigne concerning the necessity of experiments, of conversation, object lessons, physical exercise, etc. But he is wrong in believing that the tutor could thus be absolute master of a young soul, and especially in saying that this childish soul has none but good instincts, which only have to be preserved and conducted to their natural maturity. There lies utopia. Virtue has to be cultivated. It is man's weakness if he does not practice it instinctively; it is his honour to be fit to enjoy it.

**Les Confessions** (written from 1765-1770, published in 1788). — In this strange work, in which excellence and exquisiteness, and sometimes sublimity of thought and style are mingled with declamation and cynicism, Rousseau undertakes to recount his life from his birth until 1766, the year when he left the island of Saint-Pierre. The title might lead us to expect something quite different from this excited and malevolent

(1) *Morceaux choisis*. 1st cycle, pp. 321, 326.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, pp. 728, 735.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 331.

(4) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 703.

apologia. But Rousseau should be forgiven his lies and sophistry in the *Confessions*, because he wrote them during the most unhappy time of his life. He had the mania of persecution; he wandered, like a vagabond, from Switzerland to England, from Normandy to Dauphiny. Furthermore this book is the first masterpiece of the personal literature which was to reach its height in romanticism (1).

We must connect, with the *Confessions*, the *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, which Rousseau wrote during his last visit to Paris; and its descriptions are charming (2).

Rousseau's very extensive *Correspondance* has not the interest we find in the letters of Voltaire; first, because it tells us nothing, or next to nothing, that we have not already learned from his other works (and this is commonly the difficulty with the letters of all the personal writers); and especially, because Rousseau never wrote impulsively but reflected and rewrote. So his finest letters are regular literary productions: the *Lettres à M. de Malesherbes*, for instance, in which he explains his character and his genius, are an admirable complement to the *Confessions*, while the *Lettre à Voltaire sur la Providence* is a chapter of philosophy. We should also mention his letter to Prince Beloselski, on his old age (3).

**Rousseau's Philosophy.** — We have already been able to judge, from the analysis of his books, how Rousseau's philosophy differs from that of the Encyclopedists and of Voltaire. Let us sum it up in a few words: 1° It is founded on sentiment. Rousseau turns again to that "reasoning of the heart which reason itself does not know," which had been abandoned and railed at in the eighteenth century.—2° Rousseau considers, like Pascal, that man is wicked. But while Pascal attributed this wickedness to original sin, and believed that man could only be saved by grace, Rousseau, who on this point is anti-Christian, believed that man is good by nature and corrupted by society.—3° He differs radically, also, from Voltaire in that he does not believe in the efficacy of progress, especially material progress as understood by the philosopher of Ferney. He curses luxury, the arts, the sciences; he would like to bring man back, not to savagery, but to a simple and natural life.—4° His deism is more profound and more consequent than Voltaire's. He never allows himself to be sarcastic with regard to Christianity, in which he recognised the highest, if not the only, form of religious feeling among moderns. He realized the Deity through his heart and his feeling.

In short, in spite of the errors and contradictions which are included in this philosophy, we cannot but feel sympathy and respect for the man who expounded it with so much eloquence, and defended it against so many enemies.

**Rousseau's Style.** — It has not Voltaire's clarity, but neither has it its dry elegance. Rousseau wrote a mixed and unequal language, his syntax is often heavy and laboured; his sentences suggest rhetoric, declamation, bombast; but he restored eloquence and picturesqueness to French literature. Read out

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 324; 2nd cycle, pp. 712, 750.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 721.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 719.



loud the prosopopeia of Fabricius, the second part of the *Discours sur l'inégalité*, the profession of faith of the Savoyard vicar, the letters to M. de Malesherbes : what harmony, what amplitude, what rhythm ! Read the excursion on the lake (*Nouvelle Héloïse*), the vintage at Clarens (*id.*), the sunrise (*Emile*), the walks (*Emile*), the plan for the life of a rich man (*Emile*), and especially, in the *Confessions*, the sojourn at Les Charmettes, the promenades in the forest of Montmorency, the description of the island of Bienné : what charm and what truth ! what a variety of colour—what freshness and what a sense of mystery ! Rousseau has given us a soul to feel and eyes to see.

To sum up, a bold innovator in politics, a reformer of pedagogy, an "inventor" of personal literature where the ego expresses itself and becomes more and more irritated ; profoundly religious, sentimental, eloquent and picturesque, Rousseau was sure to wield a prodigious influence. He is truly our ancestor ; and Goethe was right in saying " With Voltaire, we see the end of a world ; with Rousseau, the beginning of a new one. "

### III. — BERNARDIN DE SAINT-PIERRE (1734-1814.)

**Life.** — Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, born at Le Havre, was successively an officer, an engineer, and a traveller. His work, or his whims, led him to visit the most diverse countries, Russia, Germany, Malta, the Ile de France. Thus he knew many very different lands, and as he had the eye of an observer and artist, he brought back from his travels, not observations of manners and morals, like Montaigne or Montesquieu but, sketches and rough drafts from nature. In 1774, he became a friend of Rousseau's and later his favorite disciple. During the Revolution, he was superintendent of the Jardin des Plantes, and Member of the Institute ; the Empire loaded him with favours and pensions. He was an egotist, and almost a " faux bonhomme ;(1)" and his idyllic novels might give a very incorrect idea of him. At sixty-three he married again a very young girl, who became, after his death, Mme Aimé-Martin ; hence the sentimental and somewhat ridiculous cult which Aimé-Martin, the critic, consecrated to his memory.

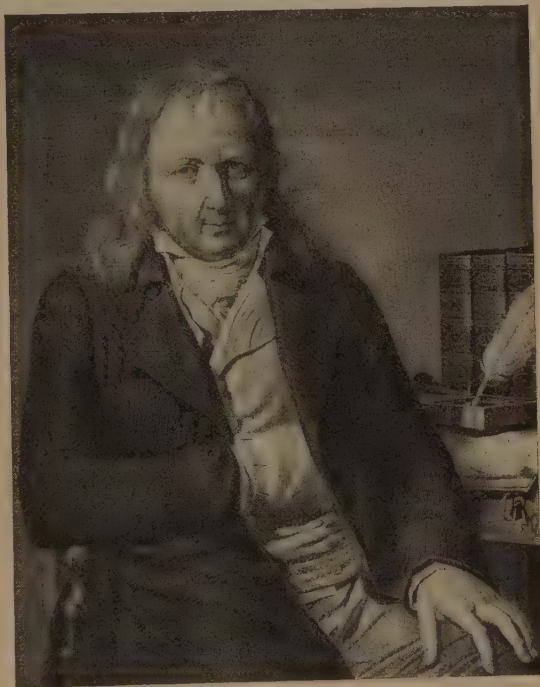
**Works.** — He first published in 1773 the *Voyage à l'Ile de France*, in letters in which his descriptive talent was evident.—Then, in *Les Etudes de la nature* (1784), he developed—to confute atheists—proofs of the existence of God drawn from the external world. The thesis is sometimes very weak, for Bernardin was not a philosopher ; but most of the pictures have precision, colour and relief. It would be difficult to see, with a surer and more accomplished eye,

(1) A man who pretends to be kinder than he feels. — *Translator's note.*



the forms and nuances of objects.—In 1787, he published *Paulet Virginie*, an idyl in which the action and characters are as true and touching as the scenery is magnificent and real. The plot, as in almost all masterpieces, amounts to little: two children, who have lived together since their birth, love each other; after a separation they are going to meet again and marry, when a catastrophe ruins their happiness. There is nothing but simplicity and naturalness in the sentiment—no insipidity, no declamation. But the immortal part of this novel is the descriptions; in them, as in pictures by the old masters, nothing has grown old-fashioned. The book met with immediate and universal success, which no literary revolution has interrupted as yet.—Bernardin afterwards published *La Chaumière Indienne* (1790) and *Les Harmonies de la nature* (1796).—His works, such as *L'Arcadie* (1781), in which he expounded his utopian politics, are now forgotten.

The author of the *Etudes* and of *Paul et Virginie* possesses, in his descriptions of nature, more variety than Rousseau; he adds, to the somewhat narrow domains of Switzerland and France, the novel beauties of the sea and of tropical countries. But he is always objective; and therefore, though he foretold Chateaubriand, he has not the same claim as Rousseau to be called an ancestor of romanticism (1).



BERNARDIN DE SAINT-PIERRE

From a portrait by Lafite, engraved by Ribault (1805).

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 335; 2nd cycle, p. 737

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DECORATIVE FRIEZE OF THE REGENCE STYLE  
Designed by Marvi, engraved by Charpentier.

## CHAPTER VII.

### NOVELISTS. — MORALISTS. — CRITICS.

#### SUMMARY

1° **LE SAGE** (1668-1747) has left us two famous novels: *Le Diable boiteux* (1707), imitated from the Spanish, and *Gil Blas* (1715-35), an entirely original work. The hero of the latter represents average humanity.

2° **MARIVAUX** (1688-1763), while writing plays, published also *La Vie de Marianne* and *Le Paysan parvenu*; he wrote delicate analyses of sentiments, and was also distinguished by a restrained realism in his descriptions of conditions and places.

3° **ABBÉ PRÉVOST** (1697-1763) published, in eight volumes, the *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, the seventh of which contains the celebrated episode of *Manon Lescaut* (1732). He also translated Richardson's novels.

4° **VOLTAIRE** wrote social and economic satires under the guise of short novels (*Candide*, *l'Ingénu*, etc.).—**MARMONTEL** (1723-1799) wrote *Contes moraux*, *Bélisaire* and *The Incas*, in the form of a false and irritating genre. He owed his success to allusions which subjected him to persecution by the censor.

5° **ROLLIN** (1661-1741), rector of the University, exposed in his *Traité des Études* (1726-28) the precepts of a pedagogy which appears somewhat timid, but

is estimable on account of its lofty morality.—**VAUVENARGUES** (1715-1747) died young, leaving *Maximes* and *Réflexions*, in which he took the side of the heart against the reason, and tried to refute La Rochefoucauld.—**DUCLOS**, **CHAMFORT**, **RIVAROL** were piquant observers of their time.

6° **AMONG CRITICS**, along with Voltaire, **LA HARPE** (1739-1803) gave public lessons, collected under the name of *Lycée*; **FRÉRON** opposed the philosophers in *l'Année littéraire*, etc.

## I. — THE NOVEL.



DECORATED LETTER  
of the XVIII century.

THE novel, in the eighteenth century, became one of the most varied of all the genres, at once frivolous and profound, realistic, idealistic, in fact almost every thing. Sometimes it consisted of twelve volumes, sometimes only of a hundred pages. We have already spoken of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Paul et Virginie*, which of all the novels continued to be the most celebrated. We shall now study *Le Sage*, Marivaux, Abbé Prévost, Voltaire and Marmontel.

**LE SAGE** (1668-1747). — *Le Sage* was not only a comic poet of the first order, in his *Turcaret*, but one of the masters of French novel-writing in his *Diable*

*boiteux* (1707) and *Gil Blas* (1735-1735).

*Le Diable boiteux* was imitated from the Spanish. The devil Asmodée transports Don Cléophas over Madrid, takes the roofs from the houses and enables him to see all that passes within—a convenient form of fiction for painting society and morals. The work is interesting, and may be placed between the *Caractères* of La Bruyère and Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*.

In *Gil Blas*, the scenes of which are also laid in Spain, the imitation is limited to details, and the work, no matter what Voltaire said concerning it, is in itself altogether original (1). The hero is a young man of seventeen, belonging to a very simple family living at Oviédo, who goes to study at the University of Salamanca. On the way he is stopped by thieves, who keep him prisoner for six months. He escapes, becomes a lackey, and serves different masters in whom *Le Sage* incarnates carefully observed types, from the *petit-maître* Don Rafael and Doctor Sangrado to the Archbishop of Grenada. He

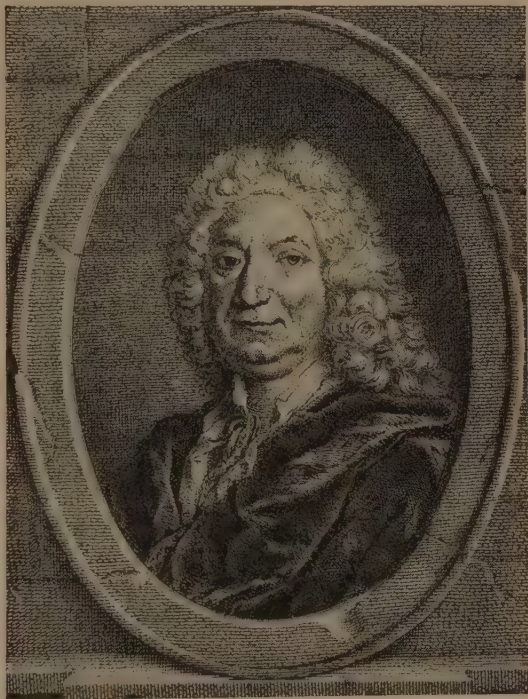
(1) See P. MORILLOT on this question in *Le Roman en France*, p. 186, and E. LINTILHAC, *Le Sage* Hachette).



becomes secretary, and then favorite of the Duke de Lerme, who is Premier, reaches the height of power and wealth, is disgraced, again becomes rich, and enters the court as secretary to the Count d'Olivarès, and finally retires to his château, where he marries and lives peacefully the rest of his life.

The book gives a very vivid and piquant picture of a society which is Spanish only in name, and contains such a variety of episodes that one reads it without fatigue in spite of its length and complexity.— Gil Blas, in spite of his faults and his weak character, never loses the notion of good and evil. He, too, could say: "I do not practice the virtue which I love, and I do the evil which I hate." But what troubles us in his case is his excessive docility with regard to men and events; of himself, he is nothing; he is always an accomplice, a shadow, a reflection; he does not act, he is moved like a puppet; he humbly recognises his lapses but falls again with the greatest ease. He represents, therefore, average, mediocre people who are led by the good or wicked will of others, and, without being either a criminal or altogether bad, he is one of those men who inspire no confidence. And he is such a perfect embodiment of this neutral character, that the end of the novel, where he becomes sensible and a sort of patriarch, seems artificial.

Le Sage's style, in *Gil Blas*, is simple and flexible. He also possesses dramatic qualities: each character speaks naturally the language of his nature and of his social situation (4).



PORTRAIT OF LE SAGE  
From the print by J.-B. Guélard.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 288; 2nd cycle, p. 743.

**MARIVAUD** (1688-1763). — Also a comic poet, and an excellent novelist. We have no room here for an examination of the relation between the novel and the play; but it may be said that though the writer who has the novelist's vocation writes plays with difficulty, the contrary is much easier so far as psychological novels is concerned. Nobody is astonished that the sensitive and penetrating author of *La Surprise de l'amour* should also have written *La Vie de Marianne*. He only had to prolong and deepen his analyses of the heart.

It was from 1731 to 1741, and while writing his plays, that Marivaux published the various parts of *Marianne* and *Le Paysan parvenu*. Both these novels are unfinished, lacking only a denouement, which can be very easily supplied. — *Marianne* is a narrative by the heroine herself, now become the Countess de \*\*\*, and which begins with an adventure with brigands. A postchaise, in which little Marianne, two years old, and her family, are travelling to Paris, is attacked on the road and all the passengers killed; only Marianne is spared. She is taken in by a country curé, whose sister undertakes to rear her. Then she is placed in a boarding school, and the story consists of all the minute details of this existence, in which the author introduces a variety of characters, very naturally drawn, dimly characterised at first but continually growing more vivid: Mme Dutour, the seamstress; M. de Climal, a near relation of Tarffufe's; Mme de Miran, the great lady, witty and good; Mlle de Tervire, etc. Furthermore, Marivaux portrays the different milieux with care and precision: the convent, the salon, the shop, even the street. The style is, here and there, a bit *précieux*, and sometimes too witty; but, as a whole, it is natural, easy and holds the attention.

*Le Paysan parvenu* is the story of a young Champenois peasant, Jacob, who makes his fortune by all sorts of means. Though the work is less moral than *Marianne*, its realism is more interesting. Familiar, everyday types abound in the tale, and are described with remarkable care for truth (1).

**ABBÉ PRÉVOST** (1697-1763). — Prévost's life was as romantic as those of his heroes. At first an officer, then a very studious Benedictine, he left the monastery in 1727, exiled himself in Holland and England, returned to France in 1734 as chaplain to the Prince de Conti, and again became an excellent preacher. It is well to know the facts of his agitated life, during which he was a prey to passions and adventures, because some of his novels are largely autobiographical. Prévost had a stroke of apoplexy, and was picked up apparently dead in the open country. It is related that a surgeon barber wished to perform an autopsy, and that at the first touch of the scalpel Prévost raised himself, and then fell dead. M. Victor Schröder has denied this story (2).

Prévost published, from 1726-1732, the *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité* in eight

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 751.

(2) V. Schröder, *L'Abbé Prévost* (Hachette, 1898), p. 113.

volumes, the seventh of which contained his masterpiece, *Manon Lescaut*; from 1732-1739, *Cleveland*, in eight volumes; in 1735, *Le Doyen de Killerine*, etc. He also translated Richardson's three famous novels: *Pamela* (1742), *Clarissa Harlowe* (1751), and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1775). M. P. Morillot justly calls attention to the fact that the originals had appeared in England from 1740 to 1748, and were posterior to Prévost's great novels, upon which they had, therefore, exercised no influence.

We shall not devote more time to this writer. Only *Manon Lescaut* holds high, perhaps first rank among the masterpieces of "la littérature passionnelle." The sincerity of the analysis makes us forget the slight morality of the chief characters. As for the style, it is difficult to find an epithet to characterise it. Is it a style at all, and could nature itself speak any other language?

Prévost had, or should have had, great influence; for *Manon* contains the germ of the passion of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, and may be considered the model for the most important

novels of the nineteenth century. In introducing English novels into France, Prévost served the monomania of the French, which is always to seek and find in foreign countries what foreigners have previously borrowed from France. But it cannot be denied that Richardson, Fielding, Goldsmith, Sterne, etc., translations of whose works became numerous in France, had their share in the transformation of French novels. From this point of view, Prévost was an initiator.



PORTRAIT OF L'ABBÉ PRÉVOST  
From the print engraved by Schmidt (1745).

**VOLTAIRE** wrote a large number of short novels, which are nearly all philosophical, religious and economic theses, presented under the form of fiction, and all are ingenious, witty and impertinent. We have already dealt with

Voltaire's works, and it is sufficient here to recall the titles and dates of his chief novels: *Zadig ou la Destinée* (1747) (1);—*Memnon ou la Sagesse humaine* (1750),—*Candide, ou l'Optimisme* (1759), the most philosophic of all, and an indirect reply to Rousseau's letter on Providence,—*Jeannot et Colin* (1764), a simple tale, altogether charming (2),—*L'Ingénu* (1767), the story of a savage transported into the midst of French institutions and manners, which may be compared with the *Lettres persanes*,—*L'homme aux quarante écus* (1768), an "economic" novel. There is no psychology in these novels, and the adventures are only contrived according to the author's fancy, merely to set off the ideas. But Voltaire never wrote better.

**MARMONTEL** (1723-1799). — We know the particulars of Marmontel's life from his *Mémoires*, which are still pleasant reading. As a man he was honourable, but, as an author, he was one of those successful mediocrities, always satisfied with themselves, whose triumph seems to later readers difficult to explain.

His *Contes moraux*, published in *Le Mercure* and collected in 1761, are very tiresome reading; his *Bélisaire* (1767) has no historical interest, and owed its vogue to a chapter on tolerance, condemned by the Sorbonne; *Les Incas ou la Destruction de l'Empire du Pérou* (1778) has a little more local colour and truth; it is a plea, sometimes eloquent but more often declamatory, against the barbaric treatment of the Indians by the Spaniards, and against slavery.

## II. — THE MORALISTS.

As in the seventeenth century, the question of morals would creep into every eighteenth century work. Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, even Buffon himself, are all in some respects moralists. But a few writers, more direct successors of La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère, treated especially of manners; and these were Rollin, Vauvenargues, Duclos, Chamfort and Rivarol.

**ROLLIN** (1661-1744), rector of the University of Paris and principal of the college of Beauvais, published, between 1726 and 1728, his *Traité des Études*, which places him among both the pedagogues and the moralists. But in him, at least—and should it not always be so?—these two qualities unite, for Rollin "shows the method of teaching and studying belles-lettres in relation to the development of the mind and heart." In the eight books of his *Traité*, he deals successively with the ancient languages, with French poetry, rhetoric, eloquence, history, philosophy; then he gives practical advice to masters and

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 675.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 298.



students. Always thinking of education in its highest sense, he seeks especially a method that will form the intelligence and develop the sensibility. His long experience in teaching serves him for a foundation; and he can never be accused of any utopian ideas. We should now consider him even timorous. Leaving aside his hesitation and timidity, we can always learn from him with how much prudence we should approach the souls of children, and how much respect we ought to have for their intellectual and moral delicacy. He is always perfectly honest.

His *Histoire ancienne* and his *Histoire romaine*, which he wrote in his last years, are nothing but faithful compilations from ancient authors. He had no object except to present the great events of antiquity in an interesting and moral narration, and in this he succeeded.

**VAUVENARGUES** (1715-1747). — Life. — Nearly all the great moralists have been unfortunate, or thought themselves so. Vauvenargues was so in reality. An officer of rare merit, he took part in the Italian campaign of 1734, and in the retreat from Bohemia, in 1742; but was obliged to leave the service because of infirmities contracted during the latter campaign. He attempted to enter the diplomatic service, (1) but failing in this, he devoted himself to study, seeking therein some consolation for his physical ills and a remedy for his distaste for life. He formed friendships with a few writers of his time, among others Voltaire, who was much attached to him, and who was sincerely grieved by his premature death. Read this funeral eulogy; "Thou art no more, O thou sweet hope of my remaining days. Overwhelmed with suffering, within and without, deprived of sight, every day losing something of thyself, it was only by the very excess of virtue that thou wert never unhappy, and that this virtue cost thee no effort... By what prodigious means hadst thou acquired, at the age of twenty-five, true philosophy and true eloquence, without any other help than that of a few good books? How didst thou take so lofty a flight in so petty a century? And how did the simplicity of a timid child cover such profundity and power of genius? I shall long and bitterly regret thy precious friendship, whose charms I had scarcely begun to enjoy (2)."

Vauvenargues portrayed himself in this portrait of Glazomène, "who had experienced every kind of human woe. At the same time, it must not be supposed that Glazomène would have exchanged his misery for the prosperity of feebler men. Fortune may make game of the wisdom of the virtuous, but she cannot take away their courage (3)."

**His Morality.** — The basis of Vauvenargues philosophy and morality was,

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 657.

(2) *Éloge des officiers morts pendant la guerre de 1741*.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 758.

then, a kind of stoicism ; but this stoicism had nothing of the frowning resignation of an Alfred de Vigny, who, having passed like him " through military servitude and grandeur ", might remind us of him. Vauvenargues was an optimist and an enthusiast (1). He believed in man's virtue, in the excellence of the passions, which have only to be rightly directed, in virtue, in glory. He tried to rehabilitate sentiment against reason, and man against La Rochefoucauld. " Those who despise men, " he said, " are not great men ". —He also said, " Great thoughts come from the heart. "; " Reason deceives us oftener than nature "; " When I see a man infatuated with reason, I immediately wager that he is not reasonable "; " If the body has its graces, and the mind its talents, should the heart, then, have nothing but its vices " ? » He emphasized the social value of virtue, and refuted a part of the fundamental sophism of La Rochefoucauld : " Because I enjoy the practice of virtue, is it less profitable, less precious to the whole world, or less different from vice, which is the ruin of humanity (2) ? " To a certain extent, he foretells Rousseau's system : the goodness of nature, and sensibility as a criterion. But how many reservations he would have made, if he had read the *Discours* and *L'Émile* ! And especially, what an adversary he would have proved to the material progress upheld by the *Encyclopédie*, and to Voltaire himself ! How he would have fought the epicurean ethics ; and how this defender of lofty passions would have protested against the emancipation preached by Diderot ! — Truly, he died before his time. His loss deprived us of the only philosopher capable of representing, in the eighteenth century, a morality worthy of the name.

As a painter of character, Vauvenargues is ingenious and subtle, though far from equalling La Bruyère whom he imitated, but whose picturesque precision he lacked (3). As a critic he is more interesting. His judgments on Corneille, Racine, Pascal, Bossuet, etc., are not those of a man of taste who follows tradition, or an ignorant one who tries to be original at the expense of common sense, still less of a partisan whose theories and prejudices prevent him from perceiving truth and beauty. Vauvenargues is an independent critic. He feels, he loves, he has sympathies and dislikes, and he expresses them with delicacy. It will always be profitable to discuss judgments stamped with so honest a personality, and which, founded on sentiment, often become paradoxical, as Joubert's did later. Vauvenargues practised his own maxim : " One must have a soul, in order to have taste. "

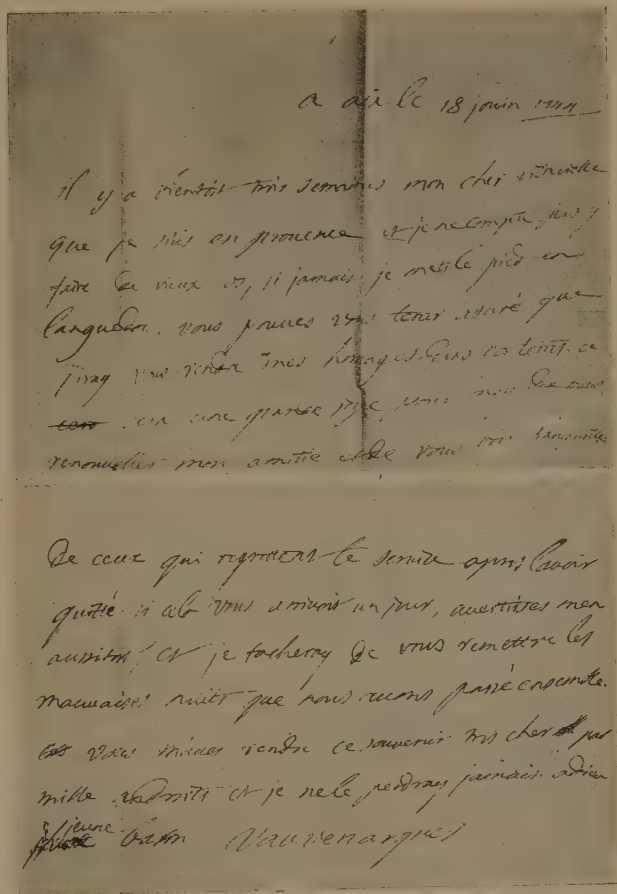
**Vauvenargues as Writer.** — Finally, as a writer Vauvenargues has some merits of great value. He said : " Clear brevity is the varnish of the mas-

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 342.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 759.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 344.

ters." And clear brevity is his chief merit. He also has a juvenile warmth which culminates sometimes in enthusiasm without ever falling into bombast. His eloquence is spontaneous, and springs from the heart. Read his *Conseils à un jeune homme*: "In every circumstance, prefer virtue above all else; it is worth more than glory. If you have some passion which elevates your sentiments and renders you generous, guard it jealously. Especially, dare to make great plans. What does it matter if you fail? Even unhappiness has its charm if it arises from noble misfortunes."—The imagery he uses to give colour to his thoughts is at once restrained and penetrating: "The first days of spring have less grace than the budding virtue of a young man."; "The brilliance of dawning day is not so sweet as the first rays of glory."; "...You see the soul of a fisherman leaving, in a way, his body to follow the fish under water, and push it into the trap his hand holds for it."



FACSIMILE OF ONE OF VAUVENARGUES' LETTERS

The beginning and end of a letter to his friend Villevieille.

**DUCLÓS** (1704-1772). — The personality of Duclos was complicated. A

man of considerable wit, he seems to have been less correct in conduct than he was affectedly frank in speech. He had a brilliant career as an independent man of letters; and without being affiliated with any party, always managed to draw his own chestnut out of the fire.

He belongs with the moralists through his *Considérations sur les mœurs de ce siècle* (1754). These consist of short dissertations, piquant in quality, but perhaps too exclusively appertaining to his own time, in which however we may still learn about men of the eighteenth century, as well as mankind in general.

**CHAMFORT** (1741-1794). — Chamfort occupied a very prominent position in the salons of the eighteenth century because of his sarcastic wit and his paradoxical misanthropy. He was a "méchant," in the full meaning of the word, like the Cléon of Gresset. In his *Maximes et Pensées* he hits off some vivid and trenchant speeches: "One scarcely imagines how much wit one needs not to be ridiculous"; "The worst misalliance is that of the heart"; "To be happy in this world, we must completely paralyse some parts of our soul": "Poverty puts crime at a discount"; "Laziness in a wicked man is desirable, and silence in a foolish one". He was unhappy despite his success in society, and died a victim of the Revolution which he had wished for—after having furnished Sieyès with the title for his brochure on the Third-Estate (1).

**RIVAROL** (1754-1801). — Rivarol, also, was distinguished in the Paris salons, and during the emigration, in those of Brussels, Berlin and London. He had wit of the best kind, and as much as an eighteenth century Frenchman could possess, which is saying much. He wrote in his note books maxims which were sometimes profound, sometimes piquant: "The people gives its favour, never its confidence"; "Passions are the orators in great assemblies"; "A little philosophy drives away religion, but much brings it back again". Hearing it said of somebody: "He runs after wit", Rivarol replied: "I bet on wit". Florian pulled a manuscript out of his pocket: "Ah, Monsieur", exclaimed Rivarol, "if you were not known, you would be robbed!"

But Rivarol has other claims to fame beside his wit. He wrote, in 1783, a *Discours sur l'universalité de la langue française*, which, allowing for its date, is a masterpiece of criticism. We have already mentioned him as a journalist. — He died in Berlin.

### III. — THE CRITICS.

The greatest critic of the eighteenth century was **VOLTAIRE** who, in the Prefaces to his tragedies, in his *Temple du goût*, his *Commentaire sur Corneille*,

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 345; 2nd cycle, p. 762.



his *Siècle de Louis XIV* and in his *Correspondance* has left a mass of original criticism. His taste was narrow, but it represented that of his time to perfection.

**LA HARPE** (1739-1803) had some success as a tragic poet, but he is especially famous for his “*Cours professés at the Lycée*”, (a sort of lecture hall), from 1786-1798. These *Lessons* he collected later under the title of *Lycée* (1799, 9 volumes). He also wrote a *Correspondance littéraire*, addressed to the grand-duke Paul of Russia, which was published from 1801-1807.—La Harpe did not have, properly speaking, a critical mind; he was influenced by the prejudices of the classical taste, and his own philosophical or political opinions. But he was the first to consider literature as a whole, in its historical development. Furthermore, on Corneille, Racine, Molière and Voltaire he has left excellent commentaries, and analyses which are still useful to read or discuss.



LA HARPE, IN 1788

From a portrait by A. Pujos, engraved by Fr. Huet.

**FRÉRON** (1749-1776) first worked with Abbé Desfontaines, editor of the *Observations sur les écrits modernes*, and founded in 1754 a little review, *L'Année littéraire*, which he carried on until his death. In this review he was inimical to the philosophers, particularly Voltaire who, in his turn, did not spare him. Fréron had in him the stuff of which a true critic is made, as well as the spirit of a journalist. When he was not led astray by his prejudices, he judged with firmness and decision.—He was succeeded on *L'Année littéraire* by Geoffroy, whom we shall consider later on.

There were very numerous journals in the eighteenth century, but it suffices here merely to indicate their importance in the history of ideas.

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A GENIUS

by Pierre Choppard (1730-1809).



#### THE TRAGEDY

Frieze designed by Gravelot and engraved by Bacheley.

### CHAPTER VIII.

## THE THEATRE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. TRAGEDY. — COMEDY. — DRAMA.

#### SUMMARY

1° **CRÉBILLON** (1675-1762) produced *Atrée et Thyeste* in 1707, *Rhadamiste et Zénobie* in 1711, etc. His was a strong talent, but he liked subjects which were both romantic and horrible.

2° **VOLTAIRE**, from 1718 to 1778, never ceased composing for the theatre. His principal plays are *Œdipe* (1718) *Brutus* (1730), *Zaïre* (1732), *Alzire* (1736), *Mérope* (1743), etc.—In form he is classical, and he imitated Corneille and Racine. But he extended the domain of tragedy by his subjects, the place of action, and the scenery.

3° Among **VOLTAIRE'S CONTEMPORARIES** were **LA MOTTE, DE BELLOY, LEMIERRE, DUCIS**; the latter produced the first adaptations of Shakespeare (1769-1792).

4° **IN COMEDY**, Molière's successors were **REGNARD** (1655-1709), author of *Le Joueur* (1696); of *Le Légataire universel* (1708), etc. His gaiety is charming, his versification delightful.—**DANCOURT** drew a witty picture of the manners of his time; **DUFRESNY** was clever at plots;—**LE SAGE** produced in

1709 his *Turcaret*, a vivid satire on financiers; — *PIRON* wrote *La Métromanie* in 1738, — *GRESSET*, *Le Méchant* in 1747.

5° *MARIVAUX* (1688-1763) rejuvenated comedy by his depiction of timid or unconscious love. He gave first place to feminine characters. His analyses are delicate, but direct and dramatic, and he possessed the gift of humour. His masterpieces are *Les Surprises de l'Amour* (1722), *Le Jeu de l'Amour et du hasard* (1730), etc.

6° *BEAUMARCHAIS* (1732-1799), very talented in contriving his plots, made his debut with a "tearful drama" and produced in *Le Barbier de Séville* (1775) and *Le Mariage de Figaro* (1784), two masterpieces of the comedy of manners. The character of Figaro incarnates the people just before the Revolution.

7° Comedy became more serious in the hands of *DESTOUCHES* (*Le Glorieux*, 1732), *tearful* with *LA CHAUSSEE* (*Le Préjugé à la mode*, 1735); *DIDEROT* set forth his theory of *bourgeois p.ays*, and wanted ways of life to be substituted for characters. His most illustrious disciple was *SEDAINE*.

## I. — TRAGEDY.



DECORATED LETTER  
of the XVIII century.

E have seen that Racine's retirement in 1677 had left the field free to a number of inferior writers of tragedy. Their works, applauded in their day, have been forgotten. But we should mention the principal successful tragedies between Racine and Crébillon: *Tiridate* by *Campistron* (1691); *Médée* by *Longepierre* (1694); *Manlius* by *La Fosse* (1698), and *Amasis* by *Lagrange-Chancel* (1701).

**CRÉBILLON** (1675-1762). — Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon was, in private life, a very original man. He lodged in his barn, in the midst of his favourite animals, smoking his pipe. There he mentally composed his tragedies, without setting down a line. When his fifth act was finished, he asked the actors to hear it, and recited it to them, and if it was not accepted, he never wrote it down at all. Appointed royal censor, commissioned to examine the works of his confreres, he was always perfectly equitable, even towards the irascible Voltaire. The court finally became his patron, and caused his works to be "royally" printed.

The following *mot* is attributed to Crébillon: "Corneille has taken the earth, Racine, heaven, nothing is left for me but hell." His object was not to excite admiration or pity, but terror. His defect was to seek this result by



artificial means, which were more romantic and melodramatic than truly tragic.

In *Atrée et Thyeste* (1707), Crébillon treats again the well-known horrible subject of Atrée revenging himself on his brother Thyeste by making him eat



THE FRENCH COME DIENS

From a painting, by Watteau (1684-1721) engraved by Jean-Michel Liotard (1702-1760).

At the front of the stage, two actors in "antique costumes,"; on the right two comic actors dressed in the French fashion.

his own children at a feast. In this tragedy, Thyeste has but one son, Plisthène, a young man, and at the end there is only one bloody scene; but the subject retains all its horror, and is complicated by love and romance. — *Electre* (1708) is the least complicated and the best of Crébillon's tragedies. He attains sometimes, in the last two acts, to Corneille's strength (1).—*Rhoda-*

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, pp. 765, 768.

*miste et Zénobie* (1711) is the most celebrated, and has a few very fine scenes. But what a melodrama! Rhadamiste, son of Pharasmane, King of Armenia, has married to Zénobie; but to save her from his enemies, he has already stabbed her and cast her into the Araxe river; after which, being desperate, he goes and offers his services to the Romans. The latter send him on a mission to his own father, Pharasmane. Rhadamiste goes to the Armenian court and speaks to the king, who believes him to be a stranger. What is the surprise of Rhadamiste to see a woman living at court under the name of Isménie, who is no other than Zénobie herself! Then follows inevitable scene of recognition. But Zénobie is courted by Pharasmane and by Arsame, brother of Rhadamiste; the latter carries her off, and is followed and killed by his own father, who at last recognises him. It is foreseen that Zénobie will marry Arsame. This imbroglio met with the greatest success, and remained in the theatrical repertory as late as 1830 (1).—Finally, we may cite *Sémiramis* (1717), and *Catiline* (1748), which Voltaire used in his own *Sémiramis* and his *Rome sauvée*.

Crébillon had a true sense of tragic horror. His situations have a frightful grandeur which recalls the fifth act of *Rodogune*. His style, often heavy and obscure, is remarkable for firmness and violence.

**VOLTAIRE.** — We have seen, in Voltaire's biography, what a taste he had for the theatre. From 1718 to 1778 he never ceased, through all the occupations and vicissitudes of a feverish life, composing tragedies and even comedies. He played his pieces in his own home, and pitilessly forced his guests to fill the roles. His very considerable dramatic work led his contemporaries to rank him with Corneille and Racine; and several of his plays remained in the theatrical repertory until the middle of the nineteenth century. Nowadays, Voltaire's tragedies are severely criticised, if not by critics, at least by the public, who will no longer endure any of them except *Zaire*.

We shall indicate the principal plays, and try to discover to what extent Voltaire was an innovator and a precursor of the romanticists.

**Voltaire's Principal Tragedies.**—*Œdipe* (1718) was a fortunate beginning. Voltaire took the subject, which had already been treated by Corneille in 1659, from Sophocles. He had neither the courage, nor perhaps the ambition, to return to the simplicity of the Greek poet; and, as Corneille had done, he used a love intrigue to complicate his plot. Here it is Philoctète who is in love with Jocaste. The famous scene of the "double confidence" may still be read with pleasure (Act. III, sc. iv).—*Brutus* (1730) was the first play by Voltaire in which the influence of Shakespeare is perceptible. More attention is given to scenic effect. The senators, "dressed in red robes," and the lictors, give colour to the picture. The place of action is changed, also; and,

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 348.

above all, a certain republican liberty breathes in the speeches of the characters. The style is strong and this play represents Voltaire at his best (1).—**Zaïre** (1732) was written during a crisis of enthusiasm and inspiration. The subject is drawn from the history of the Crusades, and the action takes place in Jerusalem. The sultan Orosmane loves one of his captives, Zaïre, who returns his love; and their marriage is arranged. But on that same day, a young Christian knight, Nérestan, returns, bringing ransom for several Christian captives, among whom is the old Lusignan, descendant of the Kings of Jerusalem. Zaïre, who knows nothing about her own birth, except that she was born of Christian French parents, recognises Lusignan as her father, and Nérestan as her brother. She promises them to be baptised, and to renounce Orosmane's love. The latter, troubled by Zaïre's hesitation, which results from her not daring to tell him the truth, believes that she has betrayed him in favour of Nérestan. He stabs Zaïre. Discovering his error, he kills himself. This brief analysis shows at least that the action in *Zaïre* is founded on sentiments and passions. The phases of the plot follow each other logically. The central situation, that of a young girl struggling between love and duty, has great tragic beauty. The style, in spite of certain defects, has an ease and warmth which makes it still enjoyable on the stage, if not in the library. Shakespearean influence is again perceptible, both in the imitation of *Othello*, and in the choice of a national subject (2).—**La Mort de César** (1732) was a college tragedy, inspired also by Shakespeare. It contains no female character and the style is very robust, like that of *Brutus*. Its republican sentiments gave it a sort of topicalness at the time of the Revolution; and after the denouement, the audiences naturally added, "Vive la liberté! Vive la République!"—**Alzire** (1736) returns to the tragedy of passions. The action is in Peru, the governor, of which, Gusman, loves a young Peruvian girl, Alzire, in rivalry with Zamore, "sovereign of the Potozee." Zamore stabs his rival, who forgives him and dies. Two fine old men characters, Montèze, father of Alzire, and Alvarez, Gusman's father, give grandeur and variety to the subject. The general tone of *Alzire* is forced, and an artificial warmth animates most of the characters (3).—**Mahomet ou le Fanatisme** (1742) is a philosophical tragedy. Mahomet is represented as an impostor, who makes a fanatic of the young Séide, causing him to assassinate his own father, Zopire, sheik of Mecca. Voltaire's intention was to incarnate in Mahomet the founders of all religions. To shelter himself from the severity of the censor, he had the audacious idea to dedicate his play to Pope Benedict XIV, who received this ironical homage very wittily.—**Mérope** (1743)



MADemoiselle DUCHESNOIS  
IN THE ROLE OF *Alzire*

From an original drawing by Chaumont,  
engraved by Chaponniér.

This print, which dates from the first Empire, shows the evolution of theatrical costume, after Lekain, under the influence of revolutionary ideas and the attention paid to local colour.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 769.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 781.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 774.

has long been regarded as Voltaire's most classical play and is one of the eight plays in the "Théâtre classique" used in French schools. The subject had been handled in Italy by Maffei, with whom Voltaire exchanged interesting letters, and was used later on by Alfieri. It is very tragical, and somewhat similar to the situation in *Andromaque*. Mérope, widow of Cresphonte, King of Messene, is sought in marriage by Polyphonte, who has taken possession of the throne, and is suspected of having caused the death of Cresphonte. But Mérope has a son Egisthe, whom she keeps hidden from the usurper, and whose return she is expecting. Deceived by false appearances, she is about to mistake her son for one of the emissaries sent to kill him, and is on the point of striking him when she recognises him. But Polyphonte (see Pyrrhus in *Andromaque*) will not let Egisthe live unless Mérope marries him. The queen consents. Meanwhile, Egisthe rushes to the temple, kills the tyrant, and is proclaimed king. The action is unnatural but theatrical; the characters are very little true to life, except Mérope, a type of maternal love which bears the trying comparison with *Andromaque*. But the effect of the whole is cold and artificial: and nowadays *Zaïre* is preferred. We should add also *L'Orphelin de la Chine* (1755), in which Voltaire annexes another country to the domain of tragedy.—*Tancrède* (1760), a chivalric play, which marks an epoch in the history of the French theatre: it was for *Tancrède* that the stage of the Comédie-Française was at last freed from the long seats which encumbered it on both sides, and reduced the action to "a conversation under a chandelier."

**Voltaire's Originality as a Tragic Poet.** — Voltaire imitated both Corneille and Racine; he possesses neither the moral grandeur of the former nor the psychological verity and probability of the latter—Of these qualities he offers us only the appearances, and the beauties of his dramas are specious. Even in *Zaïre* and *Mérope*, it is the caprice of the author, and not nature, which connects the incidents and brings about the "coups de théâtre". As to the style, if it produces an illusion "under the candles", it cannot at all bear serious criticism.

And yet, Voltaire's tragedies represent progress, or at least some evolution of the genre: 1° under the influence of Shakespeare, he introduced more movement into the action; he is fond of "coups de théâtre." 2° He treated subjects which had been ignored by his predecessors: civic duty in *Brutus* and *La Mort de César*; religious fanaticism in *Mahomet*; the conflict between conquerors and conquered in modern times (*Alzire*). It is true that he exceeded his rights of philosophy as a subject, and that his last pieces (*Les Lois de Minos*, *Les Guèbres*, etc.) are nothing but theses in five acts.—3° Voltaire varied the scenes in action and the nationality of his characters. Not dealing exclusively with Greek and Roman subjects, he takes us also to Jerusalem (*Zaïre*), to Peru (*Alzire*), to Sicily in the twelfth century (*Tancrède*), to Mecca (*Mahomet*), to Constantinople (*Irène*), etc. This does not mean that he troubled himself much about local colour: his Turks, his Scythians, his Chinese talk like the habitués of Paris salons. But we gather from his correspondence that he associated with Lekain and Mlle Clairon in their efforts to reform stage costume.—4° He often borrowed subjects from national history: the crusades (*Zaïre*), chivalry and the Saracens (*Tancrède*), the Hundred Years, War (*Adé-*



*laide du Guesclin*). In this respect, again, he shook off the classic yoke, and foretold an approaching transformation of the genre — 5° He reformed scenery, and, though he respected the three unities, he began to attach importance to scenery and accessories (*Brutus*, *Tancrède*, *Sémiramis*). In the latter play he makes the ghost of Ninus come out of his tomb; but in *Tancrède* he foresaw the danger of having a scaffold on the stage, and refused Mlle Clairon's demand for one. He felt that this rather romantic tragedy might easily fall to melodrama.

#### VOLTAIRE'S CONTEMPORARIES. —

Among the tragedies which, along with Voltaire's, were the most applauded, must be recalled: *Inès de Castro* (1723) by **La Motte**, who made all Paris weep; *Didon* (1734) by **Lefranc de Pompiignan**, which was still in the repertory under the Empire; *Mahomet II* (1739), by **Lanoue**; *Iphigénie en Tauride* (1757) by **Guimond de la Touche**; *Le Siège de Calais* (1763) by **de Belloy**, a tragedy which was acclaimed as a national and patriotic work and was produced everywhere, even in the garrisons; and by this same author, *Gabriel de Vergy* (1777), a mediæval subject, melo-dramatic; *La Veuve du Malabar* (1770) by **Lemierre**, a type of the pseudo-oriental and philosophical tragedy.



LEKAIN IN HIS ROLE OF *Gengis-Khan*.

From the portrait painted by Castelle, and engraved by Levesque (1705).

This picture represents the actor in the costume designed by himself for Voltaire's tragedy

**DUCIS** (1733-1816) must be classed apart, as he made, for the Théâtre-Français, the first adaptations from Shakespeare. Ducis did not know English. He constructed from Shakespeare's plays, singular tragedies which were neither

classical nor romantic and on the whole remarkably poor: *Hamlet* (1769), *Roméo et Juliette* (1772), *Le Roi Lear* (1783), *Macbeth* (1784), *Othello* (1792). But he was an initiator. French society knew nothing but these reductions of Shakespeare, and even after 1830 still enjoyed them. Voltaire, who had contributed, by his *Lettres Philosophiques* and by his prefaces to *Brutus* and *La Mort de César*, to introduce Shakespeare to the French, and who believed that he had borrowed from him—in *Zaïre*, *Eriphile*, *Sémiramis*—all that he could possibly lend to a French audience, received with scorn and almost fury Ducis' pieces, and Letourneur's translation (1776). On this subject he wrote a *Mémoire* to the French Academy.

## II. -- COMEDY. MOLIÈRE'S DISCIPLES.

The following writers may be classified as continuators of Molière: Regnard, Dancourt, Dufresny, Le Sage, Piron, Gresset.

**REGNARD** (1655-1709). — As to date, and even as to his talent, Regnard seems to belong to the seventeenth century, but it is customary to place him in the eighteenth. Born in Paris, and well educated, he began at the age of about seventeen to travel, going to Constantinople, Italy, Algeria, (not altogether of his own accord, as he was captured by pirates and retained as a prisoner, an adventure which he recounted in a short novel, *La Provençale*),—then to Holland, Sweden and Lapland (*Voyage en Laponie*). After this he led the life of an amiable epicure in his château de Grillon, near Dourdan, where he died of an attack of indigestion.

We must class apart, in the very considerable work of this facile writer, the pieces or rough sketches which he composed for the Italian players until 1697. A few of them, in spite of their buffoonery, possess delicate and profound humour. Regnard made his début at the Théâtre Français—with a short and charming one act play in prose: *Attendez-moi sous l'orme* (1694); after which he produced *La Sérénade*, in prose (1695), and *Le Bal* (1696) in verse. His first great work dates from this same year, *Le Joueur*. Afterwards came *Le Distrail* (1697), *Le Retour imprévu* (1700) (1), *Les Folies amoureuses* (1704), *Les Ménéchmes* (1705), and *Le Légataire universel* (1708).

*Le Joueur* is almost a character comedy; it is certainly, and above everything, a comedy of manners. Gaming had become the greatest vice of French society. From the court to the most modest bourgeois salon everybody played and got ruined. But in the choice of the principal character we feel the difference between a profound observer like Molière and an "entertainer"

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 785.

like Regnard. Regnard's gamester is a young man, Valère ; he loves Angélique, but especially when he has just lost at cards, and realises the necessity for making a rich marriage ; when he wins, he feels sufficiently happy, and forgets Angélique. To change a run of bad luck, he has pawned a picture surrounded by diamonds, which his fiancée had given him. Angélique heard of this, the marriage is broken off, and Valère returns to his cards and dice.—There is no moral depth in the piece, in which Valère's passion has no other result but to prevent his marrying Angélique, whom he does not love. But Regnard has all the same, seized the essential characteristics of a gambler, absorbed and incorrigible in his vice, and a victim of a sort of fatality. The incidental characters are amusing : Hector, the valet ; the marquis "sauteur," the countess ; the costumer, Mme La Ressource, etc.

*Le Légataire universel* is the gayest of Regnard's comedies, and justifies Boileau's witticism : " Il n'est pas médiocrement plaisant." Old Géronte is ill. He is urged to make his

will in favour of his nephew Eraste, who is in love with Angélique. To force him to disinherit a nephew in Normandy, and a niece in the Maine, Eraste's valet, Crispin, disguises himself, and plays the part of these two persons in such a way as to disgust the old man, who declares that Eraste shall be his residuary legatee, and asks for two notaries to be sent to him. Unfortunately, Géronte falls into a state of lethargy and is believed to have died intestate. Crispin thinks of another trick. He puts on the old man's cap and dressing-gown, has the notaries ushered in, and dictates his will, profiting by the occasion to leave a rather generous share of the property to himself and the chambermaid, Lisette. The notaries being gone, Géronte revives ; and they have great difficulty in explaining to him that he



REGNARD

From the portrait painted by Hyacinthe Rigaud  
(1659-1743)  
and engraved by Alexandre Tardieu.

has made his will, and that it is lethargy that deprived him of his memory. The play ends with the marriage of Eraste and Angélique (4).—This piece must be considered as a humorous vaudeville, of the Labiche or Alexandre Bisson genre. It would be ridiculous to raise any question of morals, as Rousseau did, with regard to *Le Légataire*, or seriously to criticise the rascality of Crispin.

Above all, Regnard is a delightful writer. Varied, picturesque, full of fire, his versification is better than Molière's, but in the same way that La Bruyère's style excels that of Bossuet. Regnard's art is exquisite: but we feel its presence too much.

**DANCOURT** (1661-1725) was at first an actor: then, from 1685 to 1718, he composed a number of plays, almost all on some special occasion. *Le Chevalier à la mode* (1687) is a piquant and true criticism of a class of society in which the wish to acquire a fortune, and especially to enjoy it, provokes all kinds of dishonest or ridiculous actions;—*Les Bourgeoises de qualité* (1700) completes the preceding comedy, and contains excellently drawn types of parvenus who ruin themselves for the sake of appearances (2),—*La Loterie* (1697) and *Les Agioteurs* (1710) are true human documents;—*La Maison de campagne* (1688) is a witty satire on parasites, and has been compared to Victorien Sardou's *Nos Intimes*.—Dancourt, then, had the merit of presenting to his contemporaries a vivid and witty satire upon their new characteristics; but his very timeliness caused his works to go soon out of fashion, and now they are underestimated both as to subject and form.

**DUFRESNY** (1648-1724) is interesting because of the always original situations he knew how to invent, and for his spirited dialogue. His most attractive plays are: *L'Esprit de contradiction* (1700), *Le Double Veuve* (1702), *La Réconciliation normande* (1719). His *Amusements sérieux et comiques d'un Siamois* may have given Montesquieu the idea and background for his *Lettres Persanes*.

**LE SAGE** (1668-1747), famous especially for his *Gil Blas*, wrote what is perhaps the strongest comedy of the eighteenth century, *Turcaret*, in 1709. The play, in prose, was written against the financiers and partisans, who enriched themselves at the expense of the country and of the public Treasury. Turcaret, the hero, is both a fool and a *roué*. He courts a baroness, who accepts his presents without scruple, only to give them to the chevalier whose valet steals some of them. It is a "ricochet of the most amusing rascalities." M. Turcaret, so generous to the baroness, prosecutes his poor debtors till they

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 361; 2nd cycle, p. 788

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 799.



are ruined, and at last is ruined himself. The value of this comedy lies less in the plot than in the realism of the situations, the sentiments and style. It is one of the first plays in which the question of money is dealt with. Le Sage was a true heir of Molière both as an observer and moralist; and Turcaret ranks immediately after *L'Avare* and *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (1).

**PIRON** (1689-1773). — The numerous and witty comedies which Piron wrote for the *Théâtre de la foire* have been forgotten, and now people only read, for its facile and piquant style, his *La Métromanie* (1738). Dorante loves Lucile, daughter of Francaleu; but the latter, who has a mania for writing verse, prefers Damis, a wit, for his son-in-law. Thanks to the stratagems of Baliveau, an uncle from Toulouse, Dorante succeeds in marrying Lucile.

**GRESSET** (1709-1777). — Best known as the author of the charming badinage, *Vert-Vert*, Gresset had great success with *Le Méchant* (1747). The hero of this comedy, Cléon, *le méchant*, deserves the name for his lack of heart, his moral scepticism, and his art of making mischief among people "for fun." He tries to make trouble in the home of Florise, and prevent the marriage of Chloe, his daughter, with Valère, but is unmasked by Lisette. *Le Méchant* is written in a charming style, and some of the lines are celebrated: "She has pretty eyes for provincial ones"; "The wit one wishes to have spoils all the wit one has."

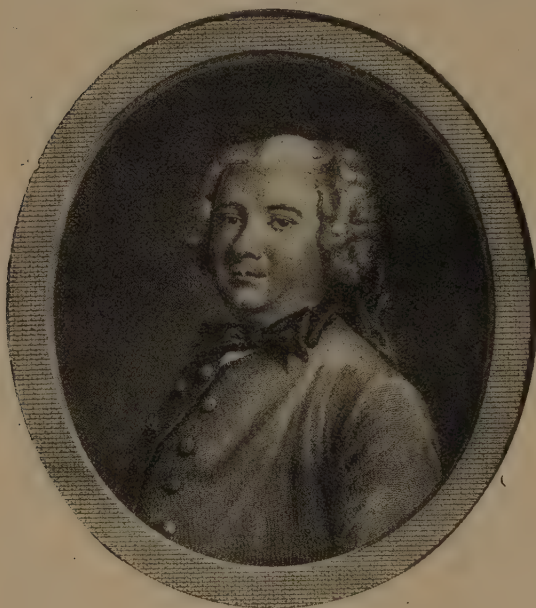
### III. — MARIVAUX AND BEAUMARCHAIS.

**MARIVAUX** (1688-1763). — Born in Paris, and an habitué of the most famous salons, Marivaux was a novelist, a moralist and a humorous writer. We have already studied him as a novelist (2). As moralist, he edited publications imitated from Addison, particularly *Le Spectateur français* (1722-1723). As dramatic author, after having composed his tragedy of *Annibal*, he worked for the Italian théâtre, producing at first only satirical pieces. This part of his work is the least known, but is interesting for its boldness and variety. He made his real début with *Arlequin poli par l'Amour* (1720), which was soon followed by his masterpieces, *La Surprise de l'Amour* (1722), *La Double Inconstance* (1723), another *Surprise de l'Amour* (1727), *Le Jeu de l'Amour et du hasard* (1730), *Le Legs* (1736), *Les Fausses Confidences* (1737), and *L'Épreuve* (1740).

(1) *Morceaux choisis*. 2nd cycle, p. 802.

(2) Cf., p. 640.

Marivaux was bold and original. People were tired of imitations of Molière and of traditional comic conventions. Marivaux deliberately made love his subject. Doubtless, love entered into the plots of all the comedies, but only as an element and never as the main interest. On the contrary, tragedy, especially Racine's, had deepened the analysis of love. Now, Marivaux divined that love could be interesting without being either tragic or insipidly gallant. With astonishing accuracy in his choice of the psychological moment, he por-



MARIVAUX

From the print engraved by Miger.

trays the troubles of first love in timid, sensitive or proud hearts, through all their most delicate nuances. And though he avoided exciting laughter at the expense of this always virtuous and sincere love, he charmed all those who love, have loved or will love, by the penetration and accuracy of his analysis. He said himself: "I have searched out in the human heart all those shelters in which timid love may hide itself, and the object of all my comedies is to make it issue forth."

The result is that in Marivaux's plays the principal roles are feminine, and in this connection it has been justly observed that Marivaux is to Molière what Racine was to Corneille. His

women form a harmonious and varied gallery of portraits, and replace, by their modest and elegant demeanour, their restrained and sincere language, and their ideal of simple virtue and honest happiness, some of the shrewd *bourgeoises* and young girls of Dancourt and Regnard.

*La Surprise de l'amour* (1722) shows us how Lelio and the countess, brought into relationship by the necessary discussion about the establishment of their servants, begin to love each other without avowing it, then confess it, and finally marry.—*Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard* (1734) begins like a charming vaudeville: Silvia, expecting a visit from her suitor, Dorante, asks permission of her father to exchange clothes with her maid, so as to

observe incognito her future husband; but Dorante, on his part, has thought of wearing the livery of his lackey, Pasquin, for the same purpose. A piquant situation results. The spectator follows with sympathetic curiosity the progress of Silvia's involuntary love for this rare valet, and of Dorante's for this strange chambermaid. The double recognition is very wittily developed, and Silvia's mot: "I see clearly with my heart" is one of Marivaux's happiest hits (1). — *Les Fausses Confidences* resumes to some extent the subject of *La Surprise*; the analysis of the sentiments which draw together, in spite of themselves, and for their happiness, Araminte and Dorante, is exquisite. In *l'Épreuve* there is a charming type of young girl, Angélique; and the same piece contains the role of master Blaise, a crafty peasant, the comic quality of which is very natural (2).

It is not to be supposed, however, that Marivaux lacks a sense of humour. He excels particularly in representing the charmingly ridiculous confusion into which the "surprises of love" throw his characters. Then he portrays wittily, and with a certain sense of realism, his lackeys, pe-dants, peasants, etc. Even to day the *Jeu de l'amour et du hasard* charms the spectator, and invariably excites laughter.

Marivaux wrote in a supple and delicate style, without either smartness or weakness. His manner is dramatic; it has animation, and sureness in noting nuances. It was not Marivaux, only his imitators, who were guilty of "marivaudage."



BEAUMARCHAIS

From a drawing of the XVIII century, lithographed at the beginning of the XIX.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 811; 1st cycle, p. 372.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 372.

**BEAUMARCHAIS (1732-1799).** — A Parisian, the son of a clock-maker, and eventually a clock-maker himself, Beaumarchais slipped into court as music master to the royal ladies; later, he became a nobleman and a diplomat. His life was a succession of more or less doubtful enterprises, from all of which he drew profit. He acquired an immense fortune, lost it during the Revolution, exiled himself, returned, and died poor. Of all his suits-at-law (and he had many), the most famous is the one he brought against a certain Goezman and to which we owe his *Mémoires*, a masterpiece among pamphlets. But he is especially celebrated for his dramatic works, which are: *Eugénie*, *Les Deux Amis*, *Le Barbier de Séville*, *Le Mariage de Figaro*, *La Mère Coupable*, and an opera libretto, *Tarare*.

*Le Barbier de Séville* (1775) was first played in five acts, and hissed. Beaumarchais suppressed the last act, and said to the audience: "*Nous nous sommes mis en quatre pour vous plaire.*" The piece then met with brilliant success, and has never been dropped from the standard repertory. It is the eternal story of the duping of the old guardian; but the adventures of Bartholo, from whom count Almaviva steals Rosine, would not be so interesting without the vital character of Figaro. This barber, a lineal descendant of Renart, Pathelin and Panurge, the everlasting intriguer, exploiting Bartholo his customer, and rallying him for allowing himself to be robbed, serving the count with obsequious good-nature while at the same time peppering the nobility with epigrams, is the type of the jealous and clever plebeian who scents the Revolution. The action, in *Le Barbier de Séville*, reveals a skilful hand, and an absolutely sure dramatic instinct (1).—*Le Mariage de Figaro*, written and read to the actors in 1781, was not allowed to appear on the stage until 1784, when, thanks to the count d'Artois, Louis XIV's consent was gained. This time Beaumarchais did not limit himself to a few epigrams: he held a brief against the nobility, and in the speeches of Figaro, a genuine tribune, he denounced and stigmatised its vices, and held it up to hatred and scorn.

The great lords were the first to recognise themselves and to applaud, which shows the strange extent of their clear-sightedness, their blindness and their cynicism (2).—*La Mère Coupable* (1792) completes the trilogy. Here we find Figaro in his old age, the countess (Rosine) a prey to remorse, etc. This tearful drama has not survived its first temporary success.

In the case of Beaumarchais, it is the personality of the author which plays the chief role in his comedies; it is his ideas, his theories and his hatreds which are applauded. Beaumarchais was Figaro. But though he wrote propagandist plays, that is, pamphlets in dialogue, he possessed in the highest degree the skill of a true dramatist. He knew marvellously well how to construct a plot, to create a situation and make use of it, how to evolve unfore-

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 821.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 825.



seen and probable incidents, to amuse the spectator with charming scenic details, and to make his characters speak according to nature, even though he too often made them speak his own mind.—*Le Mariage de Figaro* is arranged in the most ingenious manner, with that professional mastery which the Scribes and Sardous had only to follow.—As to the style, it has not a single wrinkle, and has retained all its freshness and strength. Nothing was ever written more direct, more pointed, or which can pass more quickly over the footlights. It might be said that Beaumarchais overdoes witticisms; but was not everybody witty in the society he painted?

He was, then, the true precursor of modern comedy. By his dexterity, his clean-hitting style, his transformation of the stage into a tribune, by the audacity and impertinence of his *mots*, he foretold the greatest dramatists of the nineteenth century.

#### IV. — TEARFUL COMEDY, AND THE BOURGEOIS PLAY.

In the eighteenth century, however, those genres which were too much exploited tended to dissolve and intermingle. Comedy, too comical, in the most superficial sense of the word, in the hands of Regnard, Dancourt and Dufresny, tended to become drama with Le Sage. But the latter, as Molière had done, avoided the shallows of melodrama. On the contrary, Destouches and La Chaussée came very near them.

**DESTOUCHES** (1680-1754), who is said to have been an actor, became secretary to the French embassy in Switzerland and England. He knew English comedy, and caught from it a taste for morality and effects. His principal plays are *Le Philosophe marié* (1727), *Le Glorieux* (1732), *Le Dissipateur* (1736) and *La Fausse Agnès* (1736).

*Le Glorieux* is a comedy with a very slight comic element, in which tirades are numerous, and which resembles some tale drawn from *La Morale en action*. The Count de Tuffières is a haughty personage whose father is ruined, and who would like to marry Isabelle, daughter of the rich Lisimon. Lycandre, the count's father, appears just at the moment when his son has denied him, and has heaped up lies to strengthen belief in his brilliant fortune. The father compels his son to kneel before him, and forgives him. The play is complicated by a recognition between the count and Lisette (1). — Destouches' style is clear and correct, but lacks vivacity.

**LA CHAUSSÉE** (1692-1754) was the inventor of the *comédie larmoyante*. This time, there is no question at all of making the audience laugh. We find in *Le Préjugé à la mode* (1735), in *Mélanide* (1741), etc. banal situations, handled in a laborious style, with sentimental tirades concerning social duties. La Chaussée,

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 368.

sometimes touches upon bold subjects, but never realises their depth. Nowadays he seems insipid, because he is neither humorous nor tragical, but simply boresome. And Voltaire said that all the genres are good, except this one.

**DIDEROT** (1713-1784). — This Jack-of-all-trades also spoke his word on the drama, and created a new genre, the bourgeois play, which is simply the tearful comedy written in prose.—He set forth his theories in the *Entretiens* published at the beginning of his first play, *Le Fils naturel* (1757), and in some *Discours sur la poésie dramatique*, addressed to Grimm. In 1758 he produced his second drama, *Le Père de famille*.

Diderot's reasoning on the nature of this genre is sound. Between comedy which makes us laugh, and tragedy which makes us weep, between absurdities and passions of an exceptional character, there is room for a kind of play which would represent ordinary average life, men's normal sentiments according to their social condition. Diderot thought that the depiction of great characters had been exhausted; that it had been, besides, always more or less abstract, and that the theatre should be brought back to the true and the natural. He would have the social condition of the characters more concrete and more real; a father, a mother, a judge, a merchant, a workman are all interesting if presented in situations where their natural duties are disturbed by some temptation or trial. Furthermore, they could be shown in their own homes, with the bearing, hobbies and deformations proper to each social condition.—This idea had already been conceived by Molière and Dancourt. But what would a social condition be without a type, since the condition is only interesting because of the character of the individual? A banker is not dramatic. But if he is a gambler, or has too weak a will, or is ambitious, then a conflict can arise between his condition and his character, and a drama is developed. It is very certain that the character gains by being placed in its own social condition.

Diderot advocated the progression of the drama by tableaux, and maintained that pantomime could often be substituted for words. He himself overdid the use of suspended, unfinished meaning in his grandiloquent prose.

**SEDAINE** (1719-1797) is the dramatist who has most successfully realised Diderot's theories. His *Philosophe sans le savoir* (1765) portrays the milieu of rich eighteenth century merchants. M. Vanderk marries his daughter, Sophie, to a magistrate. His son has just had a quarrel with a young officer who slandered merchants generally, and young Vanderk is to fight a duel with him on the day of his sister's marriage. The father conceals his anxiety, receives his guests as usual, and is talking with the father of the officer when the old steward, Antoine, announces, with suitable caution, that his son is dead. The scene is poignant in its restraint. Fortunately, Antoine has been mis-

taken, and all ends well. In this piece appears the charming Victorine, Antoine's daughter, who ingenuously loves Vanderk's son. Later on, George Sand took this "*profil perdu*" and made of it *Le Mariage de Victorine*.

Sedaine also wrote some comic-opera libretti, the most celebrated of which is *Richard Cœur de Lion*, for which Grétry composed the music. Among those who exaggerated the plan of the bourgeois drama to the point of absurdity was Louis-Sébastien Mercier, who published in 1773 a curious *Essai sur l'art dramatique*, and had several of his dramas acted, of which the realism was somewhat ridiculous.

We should be surprised, perhaps, did we not find among the humorous poets of the eighteenth century the name of the wittiest writer of that time, Voltaire. He did, in fact, write several comedies, the principal ones being: *L'Indiscret* (1726), *L'Enfant Prodigue* (1736), *Nanine* (1749), and *L'Écossaise* (1760). But Voltaire gives his own mind to all his personages, and does not know how to observe manners or draw character.

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PAGE ORNAMENT BY BERNARD PICART (1673-1733)



DECORATIVE FRIEZE FROM AN XVIII CENTURY PRINT

## CHAPTER IX.

### DIDACTIC AND LYRIC POETRY. ANDRÉ CHÉNIER.

#### SUMMARY :

1° AMONG THE DIDACTIC POETS WERE : LOUIS RACINE, SAINT-LAMBERT, ROUCHER ;— among the satirical : GRESSET and GILBERT ; among the fabulists, FLORIAN.

2° LYRIC POETRY : J.-B. ROUSSEAU (1671-1714), very famous in the eighteenth century, is now unjustly forgotten ; he has a sense of harmony and rhythm, but his language has grown dull.—LE FRANC DE POMPIGNAN, PARNY and LEBRUN.

3° ANDRÉ CHÉNIER (1762-1794) published hardly anything during his lifetime except political articles in the *Journal de Paris*. He was arrested and executed in 1794 ; and his works appeared, in an abbreviated edition, in 1819. A complete edition was brought out about 1860.—He left some *élégies* in eighteenth century taste, some *bucoliques* and *idylles*, in which he appears as an exquisite artist and an original writer of verse ; some fragments of a long poem on nature, *Hermès*, with a preface, *L'Invention* ; some *iambes* or satiric verses on his executioners, his finest and most personal work.—Chénier was not so much the ancestor of the romanticists as of Parnassians like Leconte de Lisle and Sully Prudhomme.





DECORATED LETTER  
of the xv.ii century.

THE eighteenth century was not a poetic century. Reasoning had not banished reason from poetry, but had banished its inspiration. There was but one genuine poet before André Chénier, Rousseau. However, poets were numerous, and in the course of their immensely productive work they occasionally fell by accident into poetry.

## I. — DIDACTIC AND SATIRIC POETRY.

We could almost judge of the lack of poetic sense in any century by the number of its didactic poems. Is it not, indeed, a singular idea to trouble one's mind to put into verse what plain prose can express much better? It is here, forsooth, that the best verse has to be "as fine as prose."

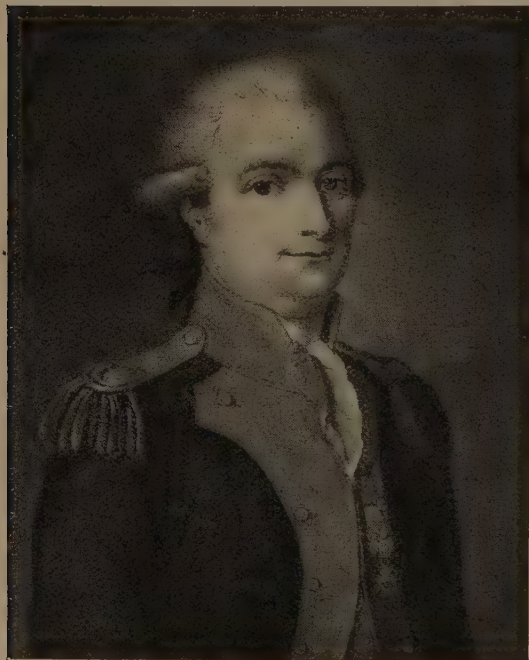
**LOUIS RACINE** (1692-1763) was the last of Jean Racine's children (1). A good man, and as modest as the son of one of the greatest poets should be, he himself became a poet by vocation. His first work, *La Grâce* (four cantos, 1720) is interesting in proving that Louis Racine had been brought up in the most fervent Jansenism. He published, some twenty years later, *La Religion* (six cantos, 1742), very superior to the preceding work. It is without doubt much less poetic than Chateaubriand's prose, but it is elegant, and artistic. — Louis Racine's best claim on our gratitude is the *Mémoires* he has left on the life of his father.

**SAINT-LAMBERT** (1716-1803), who will always be remembered for the position he occupied in the salons of the eighteenth century, and for his relations with Voltaire, published in 1769, *Les Saisons*, in four cantos. This monotonous work was well received by the Encyclopedists, who demanded nothing of a poet but "philosophy."

**ROUCHER** (1745-1794), published, in 1779, *Les Mois*, in twelve cantos. The plan was a difficult one to realise, each month requiring dissertations and descriptions which could not be sufficiently varied from one canto to another. But *Les Mois* is far superior to *Les Saisons*. Roucher had some of the gifts of the genuine poet, brilliance, picturesqueness and sensibility. Several remarkable episodes in *Les Saisons* will always be quoted.

(1) Louis Racine's son perished in the Lisbon earthquake in 1755; he was the last of Jean Racine's direct descendants.

**GRESSET** (1709-1777). — We have elsewhere noted his comedy *Le Méchant*. But Gresset is best known by a number of short poems of badinage which relate him to Marot, Voiture and Voltaire. These are: *Vert-Vert* (1734), the story of a parrot in the convent of the Visitandines of Nevers (1); *Le Carême impromptu*, *Le Lutrin vivant*, *La Chartreuse*, in which he describes the little room he occupied at Louis-le-Grand college (2).



FLORIAN

From a portrait owned by his family.

**GILBERT** (1751-1780). — Dying before he could prove the extent of his talent, Gilbert was an adversary of the philosophical party, against which he published two vigorous satires: *Le Dix-huitième siècle* and *Mon Apologie* (3). Such spirit and eloquence had not been seen since Boileau; and his poetry was very superior to Voltaire's, if not in spirit, at least in firmness of expression. But Gilbert's most celebrated poem, the one which will keep his name alive in the anthologies, is his *Adieux à la vie* (4).

**FLORIAN** (1755-1794) wrote pastorals, like *Gala-thée* and *Estelle*; poetic novels (*Gonzalve de Cordoue*, *Ruth*, *Tobie*, etc.), some charming plays for the Italian theatre (*Les Deux Filles*, *Les Jumeaux de Bergame*, etc.) We meet again in these the character of Arlequin, but transformed by sensibility. But Florian is chiefly famous for his fables, which were published in 1792, and which are the only ones, among so many, that have been considered worthy of having a place in French literature with those of La

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 380.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 843.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 837.

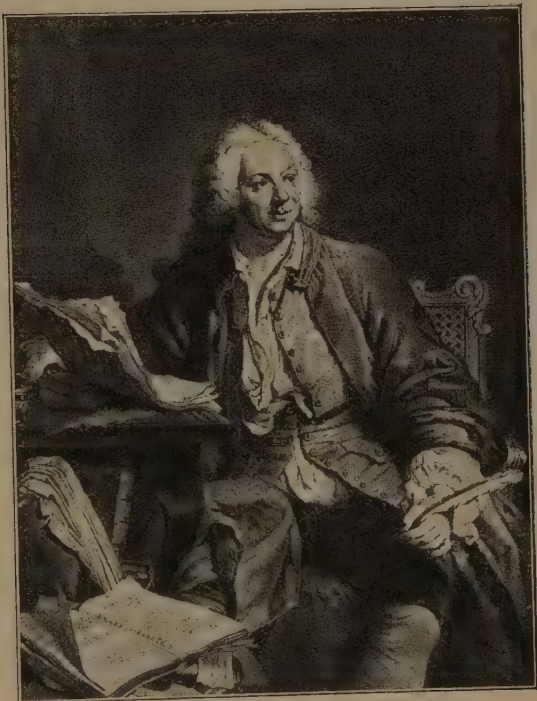
(4) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 842.

Fontaine. These fables are witty, naturally and easily written, and undoubtedly moral (1).

## II. — LYRIC POETRY.

**JEAN-BAPTISTE ROUSSEAU (1671-1740).** — There is hardly a more unhappy life than J.-B. Rousseau's. After a few years of brilliant success, he found himself banished from France in 1712, for a few licentious and libellous couplets which were attributed to him—and may very well have been written by him. He lived in Switzerland, Vienna, Brussels, tried vainly to obtain his recall, came back to Paris to solicit it, and went back to die in Brussels. He had bitter enemies, among them Voltaire, and a few faithful friends, the Count du Luc, French ambassador to Switzerland, and Rollin.

J.-B. Rousseau was considered, in the eighteenth century, and until the romantic revival, as the greatest lyric poet. His paraphrases of the Psalms, his *Ode à la Fortune*, his *Ode au Comte du Luc*, his cantata *Circe*, were long quoted and learned by heart. It cannot be denied that he had a sense of movement and harmony. Between Malherbe and Lamartine he is the only poet who represents the lyric genre with that majesty and "beau désordre" which seem to be its distinctive characteristics. But his language is abstract, poor, dim, and



JEAN-BAPTISTE ROUSSEAU

From the portrait painted by J. Aved (1702-1766)  
and engraved by G.-F. Schmidt.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 383.

lacks essentially the picturesque brilliance and inspiration to which nineteenth century poets have accustomed us.

He excelled in epigrams, and cruelly revenged himself on his persecutors. Too highly praised in the eighteenth century, he is nowadays too much forgotten (1).

**LE FRANC DE POMPIGNAN** (1709-1784) is no longer known except in Voltaire's jests, who said of his *Poèmes sacrés* : " Sacred they are, for nobody touches them." However, he felt much more deeply than Rousseau the poetry of the Bible, and his paraphrase of the *Prophétie d'Ezéchiel* gives altogether the impression made by fine things (2). His *Ode sur la mort de J.-B. Rousseau* will always deserve mention (3).

**PARNY** (1753-1814) should be mentioned, among the many lyric poetasters of the end of the eighteenth century, for the very personal melancholy and the almost *lamartinienne* harmony of his best verses.

**ECOUCARD-LEBRUN** (1729-1807) was surnamed Lebrun-Pindare on account of his odes, the most famous of which was written to the vessel *Le Vengeur*. His style is hard and often unintelligible, but we cannot deny him some vigour, and even his exaggerations are a relief from the insipidities of his time. He excelled in the epigram (4).

### III. — ANDRÉ CHÉNIER (1762-1794).

**Biography.** — André-Marie Chénier was the son of Louis Chénier (who was a first employed in a commercial house in Constantinople, and became later French Consul to Morocco.) His mother was a Greek, born in the island of Cyprus, whose name was Elisabeth Santi-Lomaca (5).

Born in Constantinople on August 30, 1762, André came to Paris to complete his education at the college of Navarre. He frequented society, where he was called M. de Saint-André, and wrote many verses in the more or less insipid mythological taste of the time. In 1782, he entered, as cadet, the regiment of

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 378; 2nd cycle, p. 828.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 836.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 833.

(4) EMILE FAGUET (*Histoire de la littérature française*, Plon, II, 290) quotes a few charming epigrams by Lebrun.

(5) André Chénier had three brothers : CONSTANTIN-XAVIER (died 1837), lawyer and consul ; LOUIS-SAUVEUR (died 1823), officer, imprisoned during the Terror and set free the 15 thermidor (his son was Gabriel de Chénier, who published the first complete edition of André's works); and MARIE-JOSEPH (died 1811), of whom we shall speak later.



Angoumois, which was quartered at Strasbourg, but resigned six months later. In 1783, he travelled in Switzerland and Italy, and then returned to Paris. He knew Écouchard-Lebrun, Beaumarchais, the painter David, the chemist Lavoisier, the Italian tragic poet Alfieri. Later he became secretary to the French Embassy in London, from 1787-1790.

It was between 1783 and 1790 that André Chénier composed, or sketched, the greater part of his poetry : *élégies, bucoliques, idylles*, and didactic poems. But he published almost nothing, and the only poems which appeared during his lifetime were *Le Jeu de Paume* (dedicated to David), and *Les Suisses de Châteaueux*. In fact, after 1790, Chénier was above everything else a journalist. He was a constitutionalist. Though a decided partisan of the Revolution, he wished to save royalty and the person of the king — (and he helped Malesherbes to prepare the defense of Louis XVI). Becoming suspect, he was obliged to leave Paris the day after the 10th of August, 1792, and took refuge in Rouen and Le Havre, where he escaped the September massacres. He then lived for a few months at Versailles. He was paying a visit to Mme de Piscatory, at Passy, when he was arrested, altogether accidentally, as the police were in reality looking for somebody else. Imprisoned in Saint-Lazare on March 7, 1794, he was executed July 20 at the Vincennes barrier. In the same cart with him was Roucher, author of *Les Mois*.

**Publication of his Works.** — As we said above, two of Chénier's poems were published during his lifetime, in 1791 and 1792, and all the rest were posthumous. — First, a few fragments were published : *La Jeune Captive* (1) in *La Décade philosophique* (1801); and *La Jeune Tarentine* (2), in *Le Mercure* (1801) from which Chateaubriand quoted three passages in the notes on his *Génie du christianisme*. But it was not till after the death of Marie-Joseph, who possessed all his brother's manuscripts, and was in his lifetime the great man of the family, that the whole of Chénier's work became known. The first edition, mutilated and garbled, appeared in 1819, through the efforts of Henri de Latouche, and made a profound sensation. But it was not till 1862 that an almost complete edition (that of Becq de Fouquières) appeared. M. Gabriel de Chénier published, from the manuscripts, a new edition in 1874; and M. Becq de Fouquières another in 1881. Finally M. Dimoff established the definitive text.

**André Chénier's Ideas.** — André Chénier was in no sense a precursor; he belonged, in his sentiments and ideas, to his own time. He was nourished on the *Encyclopédie*, he was an atheist, his conception of love was that of the free-thinking society of the time. His taste for Greek antiquity was not at all con-

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 856.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 854.

fined to himself. At that time, and ever since the Abbé Barthélemy's publication of the *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis* in 1788, everybody took an interest in archæology and Greek manners. It must be clearly understood that there is nothing truly personal in Chénier's work, except the inspiration of the *Iambes*, written in prison. In all his other works, Chénier was only an innovator in form.

In *Les Élégies*, which number forty, Chénier sings of his loves, his regrets, his melancholy. The style is dainty though direct, but spoiled by periphrase and mythology. It is often mere pseudo-classicism. Furthermore, it is very difficult to separate in these poems sincerity from imitation; there is a great deal of Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid, as well as Bertin, Colardeau and Parny. However, a few passages seem to express profound revery and vibrating sensibility (1). The four *Épîtres* belong to the same order of work. The first three are addressed to the poet Lebrun, the last to the Chevalier de Pange.

**The Bucoliques and the Idylles.** — Here we find the real Chénier, with his exquisite feeling for antiquity, not in Racine's manner but in Ronsard's. Ronsard lacked the archæological and geographical sense of Greece, reproducing chiefly its mythology and its legends. Chénier, without penetrating either its spirit or its religion, devoted himself to its landscapes, its harmonious and pure distances, and above all (for he only borrowed *descriptive détails* from Homer, Theocritus, the *Anthologia*, and always with restraint), to the attitudes and gestures of the ancient Greeks as represented in the groups on the bas-reliefs. — Among the most celebrated pieces of this kind, we must mention: *L'Aveugle* (Homer, after a dialogue with the shepherds of Syros, begins to sing and this gives Chénier occasion to touch upon all the themes of ancient Greek poetry); — *Le Mendiant* (the daughter of Lycus begs her father to give hospitality to a beggar whom she has met on the banks of the Crathis; the beggar relates his adventures, and proves to be the father of Lycus); — *La Liberté* (dialogue between a shepherd and a goatherd; the shepherd is a slave and his condition weighs upon his spirit; he cares for nothing. This is one of Chénier's most finished poems); — *Le Malade* is the story of a young man who is dying of love for a young girl; he confesses his trouble to his mother, and she goes to seek the young girl who marries him; — *La Jeune Tarentine*; — *Nègre*, etc. (2).

There are numerous imitations (3) in these idyls, and it might be said that the least details are borrowed. But Chénier knows how to express natural sentiments in a manner which is both French and Greek. He possesses res-

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 852.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 388; 2nd cycle, p. 855.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 847.

traint, elegance, and a sense of the mysterious beauty in things, beings and words.

**L'Hermès.** — André Chénier did not intend to content himself with imitations of antiquity. Who knows but that he regarded them — he who had published nothing — merely as exercises, essays, by which he was training his hand? Had he lived, we would not perhaps have possessed them at all, or, at least, a great number of these admirable sketches would have vanished. On the other hand, we should have had a great didactic poem on the formation and system of the world, the *Hermès*.

Of the *Hermès* we have only a few fragments. But it is possible, with these, to reconstitute approximately the author's plan. We say approximately, because critics are divided on this point. Sainte-Beuve thinks there would have been three cantos : Emile Faguet says five. — Canto I. Formation of the earth (according to the theory of the indestructibility of matter); the great revolutions upon the globe, the appearance of vegetation and of animals

(Buffon in verse); — Canto II: The appearance of man, his psychology; analysis of the passions; — Canto III: History of mythological and religious civilisation; superstition, fanaticism, wars, all related by a "wise magician" — (Chénier drew his inspiration from Lucretius, J.-J. Rousseau, and in general from the *Encyclopédie*); — Canto IV: History of scientific and philosophical civilisation; theory of progress; — Canto V: Artistic civilisation (1).



ANDRÉ CHÉNIER, EIGHT DAYS BEFORE HIS DEATH  
From the portrait painted by J.-B. Suvée (1743-1807)  
the 29 messidor year II, at Saint-Lazare prison.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 387.

Emile Faguet believes that "this poem would probably have been the finest philosophical poem in all French literature." This is possible. Judging however, from the fragments which have been preserved, and in spite of the beauty of some of them, the *Hermès* would have been written in a highly artificial style.

**L'Invention.** — Chénier has left us a poem, which was to serve as a preface to the *Hermès*, entitled *L'Invention*. It is a theory of poetry both as to form and subject. Chénier, who so well imitated, and almost copied, the ancients, asks writers not to borrow either their subjects or their themes. Writers should do what the ancients would do if they lived among us, that is to say, deal with the sentiments and new inventions of our time: science having progressed, and the human domain being in every sense enlarged, we should, in our turn, exploit it. — But, on the other hand, we should borrow the art of the ancients, which is perfect: "Sur des penses nouveaux, faisons des vers antiques." If Chénier means by that, verses which should be, in their genre, as harmonious and strong as those of antiquity and worthy to be compared with the latter, the theory is excellent. But if he means, as some fragments of the *Hermès* might lead us to fear, that poets should borrow from the ancients their images, comparisons and mythological nomenclature, we should be brought back to Ronsard's composite style, and to Boileau's pagan marvellous (1).

**The Iambes.** — The time was to come, however, when André Chénier was no longer to be an imitator of the Greeks nor a versifier of the *Encyclopédie*. He was to reveal himself as a poet in the deepest sense of the word, by drawing from his own soul, from its anger and its indignation, immortal and avenging lines. At Saint-Lazare, he composed what was without doubt a somewhat insipid elegy, *La Jeune Captive*; but he also wrote his *Iambes*, which belong to lyrical satire. They consist of about a hundred lines, entirely original in form and subject, which remain the imperishable masterpiece of a poet who at last found himself. The lines are fine throughout. This protest of a free soul and generous heart is founded, not on political opinions, but the essential rights of man: liberty, dignity, justice, virtue without any epithet, eternal virtue, speak with the voice of this citizen imprisoned and condemned by "executioners who bungle the laws..." The lines are full of irony; they lash and punish the cowardice of his friends, a cowardice which would not preserve them either. The style (except one paraphrase rather too elegant, to describe a clock) is frank, robust, simple, and as supple as well-tempered steel (2).

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 849.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 392; 2nd cycle, p. 858.



**Chénier as a Writer.** — It is as a writer and versifier that Chénier has been called the ancestor of the romanticists. He restores to poetic language those concrete and picturesque qualities which had been completely forgotten by the pseudo-classicists. He rendered the alexandrine more flexible, and practiced, for the first time since Malherbe, displacement of the principal cæsura, and overlapping. But he was more the ancestor of the Parnassians than of the romanticists. His true disciples are Théophile Gautier, Leconte de Lisle and, in philosophical poetry, Sully Prud'homme.

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PAGE ORNAMENT BY BERNARD PICART (1673-1733)



DECORATIVE FRIEZE  
by Bernard Picard (1673-1733).

## CHAPTER X.

# ELOQUENCE DURING THE REVOLUTION <sup>(1)</sup>.

### SUMMARY

**PULPIT ELOQUENCE** had no brilliant representatives in the eighteenth century, but the Revolution was to develop it.

1° **MIRABEAU** (1749-1791) occupied first place in the Constituent Assembly. He was of a violent temperament, and led a feverish and romantic life, acquiring the most varied information. Appointed deputy of the Third Estate for Aix and Marseille, he delivered a great number of speeches which were both logical and impassioned.

2° **ABBÉ MAURY**, too, was an impassioned speaker, but too rhetorical; **BARNAVE** was more restrained; **ISNARD** delivered a fine discourse on emigration (1791).

3° The most celebrated of the **Girondists** was **VERGNIAUD** (1753-1793), whose discourses were full of warmth and precision.—Of the speakers in the Convention **DANTON**, **ROBESPIERRE**, etc., should be mentioned.

4° **AMONG THE JOURNALISTS** : **CAMILLE DESMOULINS**, **ANDRÉ CHÉNIER**, **MARAT**, etc. Finally, the *Mémoires* of **Mme Roland** reveal one of the most beautiful feminine souls of this troubled period.

(1) The study of *Literature during the Revolution* will be found in the chapter on the *First Empire*; these two literatures form, in fact, homogeneous group until 1820.



DECORATED LETTER  
of the XVIII. century.

THE eighteenth century had no great religious orator like Bossuet, Bourdaloue and Massillon. Preaching had never ceased, of course, and the Christian pulpit did not lack distinguished orators nor discriminating auditors. One name especially has survived, that of Father Bridaine (died 1767), a vehement and bold missionary, who never published his sermons. Abbé Maury, in his *Essai sur l'Éloquence de la chaire*, has preserved for us the exordium of a sermon delivered by Bridaine at Saint-Sulpice, but which, unfortunately, is largely the work of Maury himself; still we find in

this imitation at least an echo of the eloquence which made such a sensation.

At the end of the century, the political tribune was also to have its orators. The ancient régime did not allow liberty of speech, and many great talents were buried in the secrecy of *Parlements* (1). The reunion of the States-General all at once afforded these talents the opportunity to be developed in public, besides giving them admirable subjects.

## I. — THE CONSTITUENT AND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES.

**MIRABEAU** (1749-1791). — **Biography.** — Gabriel-Honoré de Riquetti, Count de Mirabeau, a son of the Marquis de Mirabeau, surnamed "*L'Ami des hommes*" was celebrated for his writings on political and social economy. The marquis, whose character was violent, was the tyrant of his family. He had bequeathed to his son, if not his pride, at least his temperament and his taste for politics. All the Mirabeaus were original, and immoderate. The brother of the great orator, whom the people surnamed Mirabeau-Tonneau, had his seat among the royalists of the National Assembly, emigrated, and fought bravely; and he also deserves a place in literature for his newspaper articles and pamphlets (2).

Gabriel-Honoré de Mirabeau was an extremely precocious child, learning with passion and facility. He studied Latin, Greek, English, Italian, Spanish, sciences, political economy, devouring everything. When he became an officer, he applied himself to strategy and history. Then began the most romantic period of his life: he was confined on the island of Ré, was in garrison in Corsica, married, and ruined himself; and was again imprisoned, through a *lettre de cachet* issued at the request of his own father, at the Château d'If and in the Fort of Joux. He escaped to Holland, where he published a variety of

(1) This may be seen in a book by CH. AUBERTIN, *L'Éloquence politique et parlementaire en France avant 1789*, Belin, 1882.

(2) See LOMÉNIE, *Les Mirabeau, études sur la société française au dix-huitième siècle*, 1870.

works on politics and history, was once more arrested and imprisoned in the dungeon of Vincennes, where he stayed three years (1777-1780), and where he wrote letters which were published a year after his death, under the title of *Lettres à Sophie*, which form one of the masterpieces of the literature of passion.

But, above all, he worked indefatigably, making translations, writing memoirs and unconsciously preparing himself for his role as a great political orator.

Thus the Ciceronian theory was confirmed, in the case of Mirabeau as in that of Bossuet, that an orator should not enter the pulpit of the tribune without a thorough general preparation. As Bossuet had been nourished on the Scriptures and the Fathers, and struggled early in his career with the most difficult questions of dogma and controversy, so Mirabeau began political life, not only with exceptional natural gifts, but with a mass of knowledge which his prodigious memory enabled him to exploit on all occasions.

When released from Vincennes, he brought suit against his wife, became a banker, sojourned at Berlin, and finally presented himself as candidate at the elections of the States-General in Provence. Rejected by the nobility, he published a vehement discourse (1) addressed to the provincial nobility. He was then elected by the Third Estate at Aix and Marseille.

**The Orator.** — We know the place Mirabeau held in the National Assembly from the day he replied to the King's envoy: "We are here by the will of the people, and we shall not be removed except by bayonets." — His most famous speeches are: *La Contribution du quart* (26 September, 1789) (2); The Thanks of the Assembly to Bailly and Lafayette (3); *Le Droit de paix et de guerre* (20 and 22 of May, 1790), the discourse in which Mirabeau had to reply to Barnave, who had accused him of allowing himself to be corrupted by the court (4); *La Constitution civile du clergé* (November, 1790, and January, 1791) (5); *L'Émigration* (February, 1791) (6), etc.

Mirabeau had, in the first place, the physical qualities of a great orator: a head that was impressive in spite of its ugliness, powerful shoulders, a lightning-like glance, a strong and flexible voice, a slow but incisive delivery, animated by an internal emotion which was never let loose until the right moment. It would be incorrect to describe him as an impetuous haranguer; on the contrary he amazed people by his sang-froid and complete self-possession.

In fact, Mirabeau's discourses are admirable in their power and logic. The extent of his knowledge made him not only able but formidable on every

(1) CHABRIER, *Les orateurs politiques de la France* (Hachette), p. 206.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 863.

(3) CHABRIER, p. 221.

(4) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 867.

(5) CHABRIER, p. 253.

(6) *Id.*, p. 275.

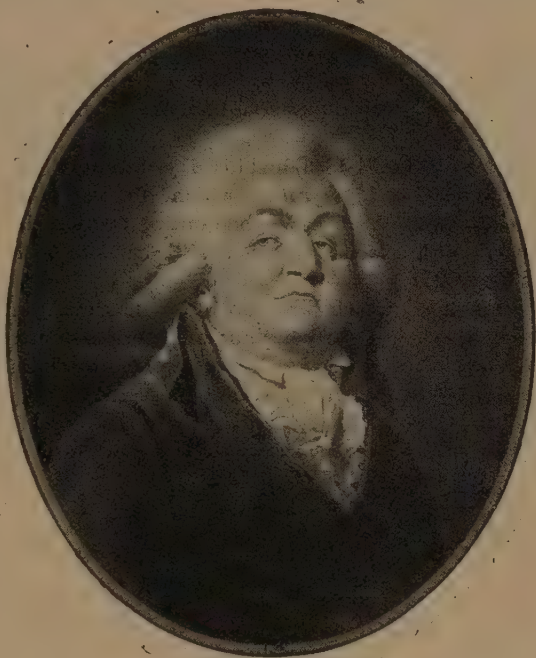


question. Furthermore, he had several secretaries who helped him to prepare his speeches. He was sometimes accused of having merely recited, with his fine voice, what was written by others. But it is just here that the brilliance of his genius was evident ; for his rivals in eloquence also availed themselves of assistance, but failed to rival Mirabeau. He knew how to use the documents and suggestions which were given him. He made his appearance in the tribune with a speech already written, but which he modified and moulded, taking from it the necessary arguments, and improvising all the rejoinders and personalities.

His style has some of the faults of the time: too many classic allusions, apostrophes, metaphors, and unnecessary neologisms, too much heavy bombast. But when the subject carries him along, and he arrives at the heart of the debate, he is clear, strong, earnest, and his sentences are powerful, ample, and harmonious. He has sudden lyrical flights, is carried away by indignation, and his verbal power is worthy of Demosthenes and of Bossuet. If we remember how much political eloquence loses, even the day after the circumstances which produced it, it is evident that Mirabeau showed true genius in speeches which after a hundred years make so vivid an impression.

**ABBÉ MAURY** (1746-1817) was one of Mirabeau's principal adversaries. He had an impetuous talent, fiery style, a gift for rejoinders, and for developing commonplaces brilliantly. But he was more a rhetorician than a genuine orator (1).

(1) See CHABRIER, pp. 224, 263.—Maury became a cardinal and archbishop of Paris. He has left an *Essai sur l'éloquence de la chaire*, often originally critical.



MIRABEAU

From the portrait painted by J. Guérin (1760-1836)  
engraved by Fiesinger.

**BARNAVE** (1761-1793) also opposed Mirabeau, but with more method and sang-froid. Both in ideas and talent he was a moderate. His discourses, especially his reply to Mirabeau on *Le Droit de paix et de guerre*, are powerful in argument and clarity (1).

**SIEYÈS** (1748-1836) will always be famous for his brochure on the Third Estate (*Qu'est-ce que le tiers état ? tout ; qu'a-t-il été jusqu'à présent ? rien ; que demande-t-il ? à devenir quelque chose*). But it was Chamfort who suggested this title. As deputy to the Constituent Assembly and the Convention, he seldom spoke. But his pregnant witty sayings were famous.

**ISNARD** (1751-1836) had his day of genius. He delivered, November 29, 1791, a *Discours sur l'Émigration* which, though too far-fetched and too rich in images which have now gone out of fashion, is nevertheless full of the most sincere enthusiasm, and can still be admired to-day for its rhythm and brilliance (2).

Eloquence, which was too often theoretic and abstract in the Constituent Assembly, had already become more impassioned in the Legislative, as we feel in Isnard's speech and those of the leading Girondists during the Convention. Political events came thick and fast, externally and internally ; and the king's flight to Varennes, the emigration, the war, and the increasing ambition of newly successful men, excited activity and inspired eloquence.

## II. — THE CONVENTION.

The Girondists, in the person of Isnard and especially Vergniaud, had already distinguished themselves in the Legislative Assembly.

**VERGNIAUD** (1753-1793) was almost the Mirabeau of the Legislative Assembly and the Convention. He was highly educated, a patriot, had plenty of ideas, and his style was a happy admixture of reason and imagination. He pronounced one of his finest discourses on July 3, 1792, on *La Patrie en danger* ; on September 17th of the same year he denounced the Paris Commune, and appealed again for civic concord to save France. — In the Convention, Vergniaud fought Robespierre ; he held that an appeal should be made to the people to judge Louis XVI (December 31, 1792). But Vergniaud's finest discourse is his reply to the accusations brought by Robespierre against the Girondist

(1) CHABRIER, p. 238.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 872.

party. The last part, in which he glories in being a moderate, is remarkable for the warmth and precision of the style. (April 10, 1793) (1).

Among the Girondists we should also note Guadet, Gensonné, Buzot and Brisset.

**DANTON** (1759-1794) was a member of the Legislative Assembly and the Convention. Much should be forgiven him, for having been one of the most



AN EFFECT OF REVOLUTIONARY ELOQUENCE: THE LAMOURETTE KISS

"The 7th of July 1792, on the false motion of M. Lamourette, Bishop of Lion, who proposed to forget all hatred of opinion, many of the members embraced each other."

*From a print by Dalencour.*

courageous of patriots, and for having paid with his life for his opposition to Robespierre. Physically he was not unlike Mirabeau; like him he was impressive for breadth of shoulders, and aplomb. But he was rather a demagogue than an orator.—On September 2, 1792, the news of the siege of Verdun by the Prussians threw the Assembly into excitement; it was on that day that Danton delivered the harangue which ends with the celebrated sentence, often misunderstood: "The tocsin that is about to be rung is not a signal of alarm, but our charge on the enemies of our country. To vanquish them, Gentlemen, we need audacity, and more audacity, always audacity, and France is saved." He deli-

(1) *Morecaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 869.

vered another impetuous speech on March 7, 1793, to compel the Convention, in the evening after a long and uncertain meeting, to organise the revolutionary tribunal. He apparently wished to use it as an instrument for victory against the enemies of France; we know what it became, and that he himself was one of its victims. (1)

**ROBESPIERRE** (1759-1794). — Robespierre's eloquence is difficult to define. His speeches are often spoiled by the most artificial rhetoric, a taste for antiquity which smacks less of the humanist than the pedant, cold grandiloquence, a sentimental jargon which he caught from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and, in particular, a something false and evasive which characterised his Jacobin hypocrisy. But the quality of his discourses is remarkable. He knew how to compose, how to place and link his arguments; he knew also how to develop a commonplace, to renew it by adapting it to circumstances; he closed in more and more upon his adversaries and his auditors, and ended by convincing even when he did not persuade. He was often active, and rough, even to the point of making his listeners tremble.

Among his most famous speeches are his accusation against the Girondists on May 31, 1793, and his defense of himself at the meeting of July 26, 1794.

*Saint-Just*, *Barrère*, *Tallien* and *Carnot* should also be cited, as well as *Malesherbes* (1721-1794), who, after having distinguished himself by his intelligent tolerance while superintendent of the Press, became minister, followed Turgot into retirement, and claimed the dangerous honour of defending the accused king before the Convention; — and *De Sèze* (1748-1828), already celebrated as a lawyer, who likewise pleaded in favour of Louis XVI. The following words from his plea have been preserved: "I seek among you judges, and only find accusers."

### III. — JOURNALISTS.

We shall only mention a few of the journalists who, while the preceding orators fought in the tribune, contributed by their pens to the attack or the defense.

*Camille Desmoulins* (1760-1793) worked on the *Révolution de France et de Brabant*, and on the *Vieux Cordelier*, defending moderate republican ideas.

*Mallet du Pan* (1749-1800) took sides against the Revolution in the *Mercure de France* and the *Mercure britannique*, as *Rivarol* did in the *Journal politique*

(1) CHABRIER, pp. 309, 329.



national and the *Actes des Apôtres* ; **André Chénier**, in the *Journal de Paris*, was one of the most courageous and clear-sighted adversaries of Jacobin excess.

**Marat** (1744-1793) defended Jacobinism in *L'Ami du peuple*, as **Hébert** (1755-1794), did in *Le Père Duchesne*.

Finally, revolutionary literature includes the *Mémoires* of **Mme Roland** (1754-1793), which she wrote in prison. This work is interesting both for the political history of the Girondist party and for the knowledge it gives us of the greatest and tenderest feminine soul ever inflamed to the point of martyrdom by love of liberty.

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PAGE ORNAMENT

Designed by de Sève, engraved by Patas.





ORNAMENT TAKEN FROM NAPOLÉON I's *Livre du Sacre*.  
Designed by Percier (1764-1838) and Fontaine (1762-1833).

## FIFTH PART

# Nineteenth Century.

### CHAPTER I.

## GENERAL SURVEY OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

### SUMMARY

1° The nineteenth century is divided into two periods : **romanticism** from 1815 to 1850 ; **realism** from 1850 to 1880. At the end of the century, a return to **symbolism**.

2° The public had become legion. Writers could no longer address themselves to any defined taste ; they sang or they narrated for themselves. Literature became individual. — The whole century possessed : a **feeling for nature**, **religious scrupulousness**, mania for **moral and social theses**.

3° **Romanticism** was of French origin (J.-J. Rousseau) and of foreign origin (Goethe, Schiller, Ossian). It was characterised by the abandonment of anti-

quity and southern literatures for northern literatures; the substitution of imagination for reason; individualism; liberty of genres and of style.

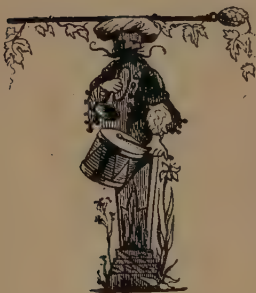
4° **Realism** was objective, impersonal, documentary and unmoral.

5° The **press** became, in the nineteenth century, a new power which formed or deformed opinion.

6° The arts followed the literary movement: **pseudo-classic** with David and his pupils, they became **romantic** with E. Delacroix, and **realistic** with Courbet.—Science made enormous progress in every sense, invading philosophy and criticism.

7° **AMONG EXTERNAL INFLUENCES** were England (Scott, Byron); Germany (Schiller, Schlegel, Mommsen), Italy (Leopardi, Manzoni), Russia (Gogol, Tourgueniev, Tolstoï).

## I. — GENERAL DIVISIONS.



DECORATED LETTER  
of Louis-Philippe period

THE nineteenth century began, in a literary and social sense, with Chateaubriand and Mme de Staël; *Atala* (1801) and the *Génie du Christianisme* (1802), and *Littérature* (1800) already contained all the new aspirations. But the Empire retarded their influence, which was not felt until the Restoration in 1814. Meanwhile, before that time the antagonism between the pseudo-classicalists and the innovators was already begun. Political opinions were mixed up with literary theories.

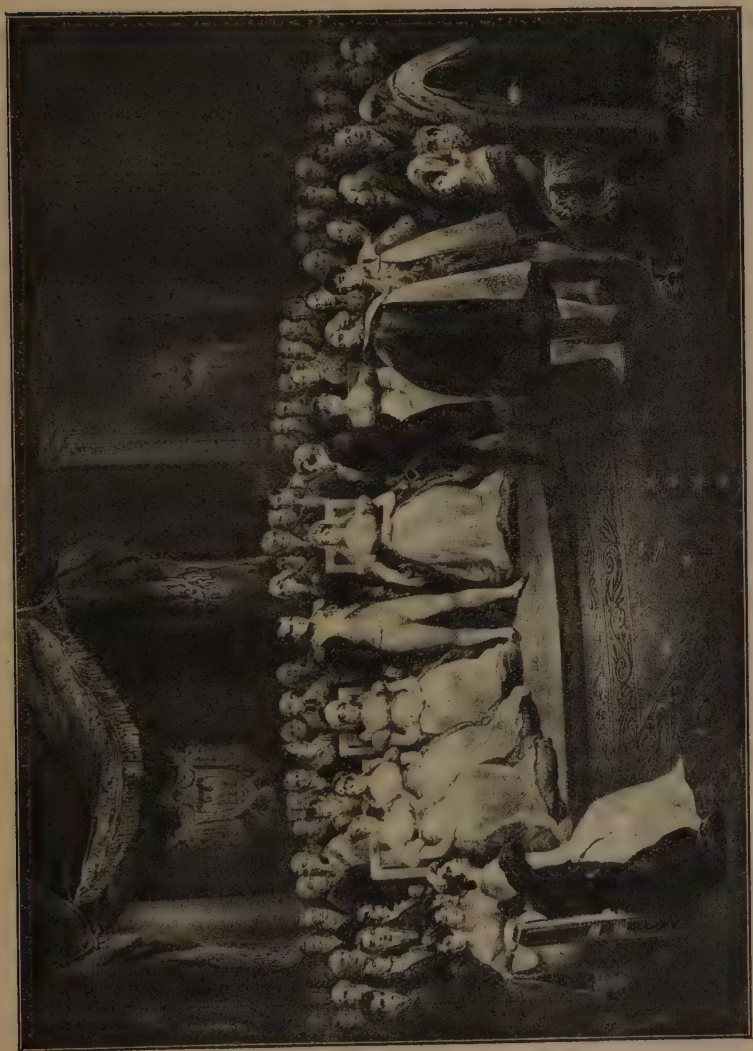
The romantic period began in 1820 with the *Méditations* of Lamartine, and lasted until about 1850. From 1850 to 1870, realism invaded all the genres, especially drama, while poetry underwent archæo-

logical and scientific influences. After 1870, there was a crisis of naturalism, and towards 1880 a return to more subtle forms of art, with symbolism developing parallel with naturalism.

The century ended with a new impulse towards romanticism, but a romanticism which had profited by realism and symbolism, and which was chiefly manifested, in drama, in the *Cyrano* of Rostand.

It will be observed that, in nineteenth century literature, changes in schools and tendencies corresponded with historic facts: romanticism, restrained during the Empire, burst into flower with the Restoration and the July Monarchy; — after 1848, realism, after 1870, naturalism and symbolism. Such concord could only have been produced, at each of these dates, by a manifestation of





NAPOLEON SURROUNDED BY GREAT MEN OF HIS TIME

*From the painting by Victor Adam (1804-1867).*

In this imaginary assembly, the artist has grouped, without any care of historical exactitude, the enemies and adversaries of Napoleon as well as his friends and courtiers. Beside and behind the Emperor are the members of his family and his ministers : Fontanes, Maury, Lebrun, Talleyrand, Fouché, Daru, Carnot, Cambacérès ; at the left of the picture, Madame de Staël who is sulking; the actresses and actors of the French Theatre, then, nearer the throne, the artists and musicians; at the right under the large table which decorates the end of the hall, Chateaubriand is surrounded by writers and scholars ; at the front on the right, Mmes Campan and de Genlis.

public opinion and a change in social forces, not by any fortuitous circumstance like the accession of a king, a battle, or a discovery.

On the other hand, all the genres which had sprung up in the eighteenth century, found in the nineteenth the circumstances which were favourable to their full and free development. More disinterested, less aggressive, thinking more of the future than of a polemical present, the philosophers, critics and historians produced honest and lasting work. Eloquence developed under better conditions in a different parliamentary regime, and before a larger and better educated public; and, finally, a new power, hardly foreseen even during the Revolution, namely, the press, absorbed, or combatted, or orientated most men of talent.

## II. — THE NEW PUBLIC.

The Revolution transformed the public.

"Before 1789," says Emile Faguet, "the author addressed himself to a very limited and familiar public which, if not composed of five or six literary salons in Paris, was at least sufficiently and exactly represented by them. It was then to people whom he knew, whose faces were before his eyes as he wrote, that an author directly addressed himself. Literature before, 89 was, as a whole, a social literature.

"Since 1815, the public has been an entire nation, less numerous than the whole French nation, doubtless; but a complete people, numerous, widely dispersed, vast, and, please observe, knowing no hierarchy, undisciplined, and no longer taking its cue from a few Parisian literary committees (1)."

The public grew larger with the progress of the century. But during the romantic period it remained a sort of élite, few in number. If literature, after the Revolution of 1848, inclined to realism; if, after 1870, it became naturalistic, it was to satisfy a more mixed public, in which the new arrivals claimed their rights; and the upper classes lowered their taste to that of the people more willingly and more rapidly than the people could elevate theirs.

The result of this was the modification and gradual disappearance of what the preceding centuries had called taste, and which always signifies, among the public, the search and desire for a satisfaction defined by principles and by education; among authors, the necessity for attaining, but never going beyond, a certain æsthetic result. The public, then, being disposed to accept everything, and clamouring incessantly for the satisfaction of an insatiable curiosity, for new sensations, the writers rid themselves of all their prejudices. From this situa-

(1) *Introduction* to volumes VI and VIII of the *Littérature française* by PETIT DE JULLEVILLE (Colin).

tion arose the remarkable success of plays, novels, and the press in the nineteenth century.

### III. — WRITERS.

In speaking of writers, we have to set apart those who devoted themselves to philosophy or science, and who were, for the greater part, less occupied in pleasing the public than in studying and making clear the great psychological, social, and critical problems, and animated only by a love for truth. But what of the others, who addressed themselves to the public we have endeavoured to



"THE HIGHWAY TO POSTERITY"

*Fragment of a romanticist caricature.*

Lamartine is dreaming in the clouds, whilst Victor Hugo mounted on a hippogriff draws behind him the romanticists: Théophile Gautier, Cassagnac, Fr. Wey, P. Fouché, Eugène Sue as a sailor, Alexandre Dumas as a traveller, Balzac and his inseparable Gozlan (the long haired), the brothers Delavigne, one carrying the other, Méry, M. and Mme Ancelot; in the second row: Frédéric Soulié, "taken away by the Devil to a high mountain", and Alphonse Karr, as a wasp.

describe? how do they compare with the writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries?

They could no longer watch for and satisfy a taste which was well defined for each genre and in each society. "What remained for the author? To speak for himself, to write in order to satisfy himself, to tell of his own sentiments and passions, his ideas and his dreams, to think aloud. Doubtless, he still addressed himself to a public, but he was not subjected to it, and he no longer sought to adapt himself to it for the reason that he was no longer in contact with it. The personal literature of a democratic society is the natural literature of a numerous and widely dispersed public, without any hierarchy, not disciplined, and unknown to the authors.—And by personal literature

must not be understood simply an elegiac literature, whether in prose or verse, a literature of self-expansion, of confessions and confidences, but an individualistic literature, in which each author, without troubling himself about the probable opinion of the public, because he cannot, follows the natural bent of his own mind—a literature consequently full of variety, very adventurous and very uneven (1)... ” These observations of E. Faguet's are very true. The writer becomes individualistic because he can no longer address himself to a limited public. Besides, there were other and more general causes for this individualism, viz., the political and social causes which resulted from the Revolution.

On the other hand, though during approximately the first half of the century, the author was jealous of his own personality, and forced his work proudly upon various portions of the public, it must be admitted that often, especially during the latter half of the century, he cultivated what Sainte-Beuve has very aptly called “ industrial literature. ” In preceding ages no literature had supported its votaries. Voltaire did not become rich from his works, but through financial speculation. It was a wise movement which established laws recognising literary property, and securing for an author as well as an actor or publisher the profit of his labours. But, from that time, the writer's vocation became, more than it had ever been before, a craft. Shall we say that it is more honourable to live by the sale of one's own works than on an official pension? Assuredly. But the public is also a tyrant, and will only buy books that please it; and as it rarely happens that the majority like what is beautiful, disinterested and moral, it follows that the writer becomes the slave of the most frivolous or even the lowest taste. It must be acknowledged that there were few writers, even among the greatest, in the nineteenth century, who had the courage not to sacrifice to this new public, this idol with a thousand heads, and to resist the temptation to make their fortunes. This results in an estimation of authors according to the amount of their incomes. And how many writers have renounced their originality for many years, in order to work in popular genres and earn money?

#### IV. — THE NEW SENTIMENTS.

Neither this public nor these writers had the same mind or soul as those of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But it is very difficult to define and catalogue sentiments and ideas of so complex a nature. We can only try to indicate their essential nature.

1° The feeling for nature permeated the entire century and all the genres

(1) *Introduction* to vols. VI and VIII of the *La littérature française* by PETIT DE JULLEVILLE (Colin).



everything in nature was loved, the sea, mountains and forests, familiar landscapes as well as foreign scenes; and the public never tired of all this.

2° Religious sentiment. — At first, under the influence of Chateaubriand and Lamartine, later because of interest in social questions — in which, contrary to ideas in the eighteenth century, religion was taken into account — the nineteenth century returned to a respect and feeling for religious things. Even the adversaries of Christianity, positivists or sceptics, gave up the attitude of denial and impertinence so dear to Voltaire; without being believers, they at least knew how to consider calmly the historical and moral evolution of Christianity.

3° Historical, archæological and scientific curiosity, first appeared in literature as a rather childish love of local colour, but rapidly brought about a rapid and decisive progress towards truth and accuracy. Literature itself became realistic, and the novel had scientific pretensions. In Flaubert's *Salammbô* readers enjoyed the reconstitution of Carthage; in Loti's novels the picture of civilisations actually seen by the author; in Zola's, the detailed descriptions of factories, shops, etc.

4° The Taste for Moral and Social questions. — The entire public took an interest, even in purely literary genres, in the discussion of various questions. They cared for romantic drama, less for its form than for its political and social audacity. Novels were no longer solely devoted to describing the passions, but took sides for or against divorce, misalliances, women's rights, etc. This taste persisted during the entire century. Problem plays existed as early as 1815; in fact the subjects taken up by Dumas fils and Augier had already been handled during the Restoration and in Louis-Philippe's reign. After George Sand and Balzac the novel passed through a period of stagnation, but under the influence of the Russian novelists the social question became more than ever paramount in this genre, and the naturalistic novels became socialistic too.

## V. — ORIGIN AND DEFINITION OF ROMANTICISM.

But while literature, especially poetry, lingered in the track of the pseudo-classicalists, a great movement of rebirth and renewal was announced in the work of Chateaubriand and Mme de Staël. In this chapter we shall only indicate its beginnings, and attempt its definition.

**French origin of Romanticism.** — In the eighteenth century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau was already a romanticist in two respects: viz., he preferred individual or personal literature, and he described nature subjectively. Furthermore, he restored eloquence and rhythm to French prose. Diderot, also, was personal; he advocated extreme liberty in all the genres, and in his dramatic theory demanded an admixture of comedy and tragedy, that is to say, after all,

realism. His most brilliant disciple, Sébastien Mercier (1740-1814) published in 1773 an *Essai sur l'art dramatique*, which contains all that is essential in the preface to Victor Hugo's *Cromwell*.

**Foreign Sources of Romanticism.** — From the day when Ducis adapted (and with what timidity!) some Shakespearian plays, the French public understood that there was something else beside classic comedy and tragedy. Especially, after translations were made of Gœthe's *Werther* (1778), and of *Young's Night Thoughts* (1769), and when melodrama began to imitate Schiller, classical taste was disturbed, and a broader taste began to be formed.

But of all foreign works, those which had the strongest influence upon French and European imagination, were the singular compositions published by the Scotsman, MacPherson (1738-1796) in the years 1762 and 1763, and which were immediately translated into all languages: *Fingal's Cave* and *Témora*. These were supposed to be translations into English prose of poems written in the third century by the gaelic bard Ossian. We are not concerned here as to their authenticity; MacPherson really did find a few ancient fragments, which he arranged and developed according to his own fancy. The only important question is that of fact. True or false, this Ossian completely transformed the imagination of readers at the end of the eighteenth century. The greatest minds, like Gœthe, Mme de Staël, Herder, spoke of him with enthusiasm. Right or wrong, here was a new source of poetic sensations.

**Essential Elements of Romanticism.** — Romanticism has been defined in a variety of ways.

Mme de Staël, in her *Littérature* (1800) says: "The literature of the ancients is for the moderns a transplanted literature; romantic, or chivalric literature is indigenous to us, for it was our religion and our institutions which gave it birth." So, in her opinion, it was a return to Christian and national inspiration.

Stendhal, in *Racine et Shakespeare* (1823), writes: "Romanticism is the art of presenting to the nations those literary works which, in the existing state of their customs and beliefs, are capable of giving them the most pleasure. Classicism, on the contrary, presents to them the literature which gave the greatest possible pleasure to their great-grand-fathers."

Guiraud, in *La Muse Française* (1820), says: "Our thoughts have been forced back upon ourselves: so literature has to be more intimate, and now reveals to us secret corners of the heart ignored before the great shocks of the Revolution; it will express the sentiments and passions thus created; and it will give us poetry, for unhappiness is, of all poetic inspirations, the most fecund."

Lamartine writes, in the preface to his *Méditations* (1849): "I was the first who caused poetry to descend from Parnassus; I have given to that which we call the



THE HEROES OF THE REPUBLIC, WELCOMED BY OSSIAN

*From the painting by Girodet (1767-1824) at the desire of the First Consul.*

Ossian, the old king-bard, surrounded by his father Fingal, his son Oscar, the heroes Diarmait, Cuchulin, etc., receives in his Olympia the French Generals Desaix, Hoche, Kléber, Marceau, Caffarelli, etc.

Muse, instead of a lyre with its conventional seven cords, the fibres of man's heart, touched and thrilled by the innumerable vibrations of the soul and of nature."

After such a variety of definitions, we may endeavour to assemble the essential features of French romanticism:

1° Writers renounced the imitation of the ancients (from whom, it is true, they had already taken all the assimilable psychology; and to whom they were to return, but in the plastic and archæological poetry of a Leconte de Lisle);

2° Mythology was discarded; there was a return to the Christian marvellous, or simply to religious impressionability and to pantheism;

3° For the imitation of the ancients was substituted imitation of foreign literatures, especially the literatures of the North, which taught liberty in art and the power of the imagination.

4° It was imagination, in fact, which became the dominant faculty in objective literature, and sensibility in subjective literature; — reason was no longer all-ruling;

5° Subjects were taken from modern history, from external nature, or from the writer's own heart: local colour, realism transformed by art, impressions and sensations;

6° The poet himself was the only judge of his inspiration and his art; his literature was entirely personal and individual. He was worth what his ego was worth. He did not have to take into account either probability or general truth; his own passions, his own way of seeing and feeling nature, were legitimate;

7° No more strictly defined genres, no more poetic theory, nor rhetoric. Poetry freely chose its own form; the discrepancies of tragedy and comedy disappeared in the play; novels were historical, social, extravagant;

8° There was the same liberty in style. The writer made for himself, independent of grammatical and academic authorities, his vocabulary and syntax. In versification the license which had been forbidden by Malherbe was resumed.

Such are the general characteristics of romanticism. In reality, they are all comprised in one: literature became individualised and liberated itself from all tradition and all rules. — In studying Chateaubriand, Hugo, Lamartine, etc. we shall see more clearly the nature of, and difference between, these elements (1).

## VI. — REALISM.

After 1850, or about that period, realism, which later on became naturalism, was developed as a reaction to romanticism.

(1) For the definition and discussion of romanticism among contemporaries, from 1815-1830, see *La Presse littéraire sous la Restauration*, par CH.-M. DES GRANGES.



1° For the subjectivity, individualism, and egotism of romanticism, were substituted objectivity, the impersonality of the artist.—In this respect, realism was a return to the classic spirit.

2° But while classicism considers nature in its psychological, general and selected aspects, realism observes and reproduces nature in its entirety, external or intimate, just as it presents itself and without alteration. Realism aims at completeness.

3° Realism is not æsthetic, it is scientific; it has no thesis, and is essentially unmoral and indifferent.

Realism is found in contradiction with its own principles exactly in propor-



"THE BURIAL AT ORNANS," BY GUSTAVE COURBET (1818-1877)

This picture, the most sensational masterpiece of the head of the realistic school of painting, appeared at the Salon in 1851, and its title was immediately changed to *Burial of Romanticism*.

tion to the talent of the writer. There must be one of two things: either the poet or the novelist merely practices photography, in which case he does not count at all; or he is an artist, and disintegrates the real in order to reorganise it. The most famous of the naturalists, Emile Zola, defines his art: "Nature seen through temperament."

## VII. — THE PRESS.

All these tendencies were more or less excited and satisfied by the Press. The extraordinary development of newspapers was not due solely to speculation, which seized on the banal curiosity of boobies to exploit the press, and

make huge fortunes. The press corresponds to one of the victories of public opinion after the Revolution : the right to know something about everything in order to discuss it. This right, ignored by the first Empire, is one of those which the liberals of the Restoration most insistently claimed ; for in France, liberty is measured, rather naively, by the liberty of the press.

Politics, doubtless, occupies the largest place. But the newspapers have considerable importance in the history of literature in the nineteenth century. Through their accounts of new works, by their dramatic feuilletons, they popularised and submitted to general and immediate discussion the whole of intellectual production. They transformed certain literary genres : the story, the novel-feuilleton, cut into instalments, became the genre of surprises, of striking and brutal shocks. Furthermore, morals, sociology, even science, which had already in the eighteenth century been condensed into brochures from long didactic treatises, shrank into articles ; and a habit was formed of summing up vividly and clearly, for public use, these difficult questions. From the point of view of its appeal to the public, and of the formation if not of taste at least of opinion, this method gave good results.

But it also had serious drawbacks, both for readers and writers. Readers have accustomed themselves more and more to receiving and accepting ready-made judgments on the new book, the new play, the sensational discovery. And these judgments are sometimes superficial or partial, sometimes mere advertisements. — Writers, on their side, because of the necessities of their craft, deal with every subject, rather at random, and with no well-defined speciality : such and such a journalist passes, by right of promotion, from reporting to criticism. The language too, though it may gain in rapidity and clearness, has become surcharged with neologisms, and is as unstable as the fashions.

At the same time, in spite of these faults, and of lightness and sometimes immorality in certain journals, the press has been — as it will never cease to be — an admirable influence in the nineteenth century, destined to spread information and liberalism throughout all classes of society.

To the newspapers properly so-called, we must add the reviews, the most famous of which—especially the *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, the *Revue de Paris*, the *Correspondant* — have given the public, in a form more serious than that of the newspaper, more nimble than that of the book, countless literary, economic, political or historical contributions.

## VIII. — ARTS AND SCIENCES.

**The arts** did not profit at first, in the nineteenth century, by the freedom left to all manifestations of thought and talent. — The school of David,



*Moniteur. Etoile Drapeau Blanc. Album. Cour. Français. Peuple. Réveil. J<sup>al</sup> des Théâtres*

<i>Le</i>	<i>L'Étoile</i>	<i>Le</i>	<i>L'Album</i>	<i>Le Courrier</i>	<i>La Foudre</i>	<i>Le Réveil</i>	<i>Journal des</i>
<i>Moniteur</i>	<i>Ultra</i>	<i>Drapeau Blanc</i>	<i>Liberal</i>	<i>français</i>	<i>Ultra</i>	<i>Liberal</i>	<i>Théâtres</i>
<i>Officiel</i>	<i>royalist</i>	<i>Ultra royalist</i>		<i>Liberal</i>	<i>royalist</i>		



*Cour. des Spectacles. Débats. Miroir. Gazette. Chat. Homme. Constitutionnel. Paris*

<i>Courrier des</i>	<i>Les Débats</i>	<i>Le Miroir</i>	<i>La Gazette</i>	<i>La Quotidienne</i>	<i>Le</i>	<i>Paris</i>
<i>spectacles</i>	<i>Constitutional</i>	<i>Liberal</i>	<i>de France</i>	<i>Royalist and</i>	<i>Constitutionnel</i>	
			<i>Royalist</i>	<i>Ultramontain</i>	<i>Liberal</i>	

#### THE FRENCH PRESS IN 1823

*From a satirical print in colours.*

At this heroic period of the Press, the journals were sold only by subscription; they were of small size, cost very dear, and contained more articles of doctrine or polemics than news.

pseudo-classical, was almost official. There is an Empire Style not only in furniture and bronzes, but in painting and sculpture.

Without doubt, Guérin, Girodet, Gérard were artists of great talent, but the only one, during this period, who was original and lifelike, was Prudhon. By his personal tone, he was already a romanticist.

Romanticism appeared brilliantly in *Le Naufrage de la Méduse* by **Géricault** (1819), and soon found its most complete representative in **Eugène Delacroix** (1). The romanticist school, by its independence and fancifulness, and especially by its exaggerated disdain for design, provoked a reaction made illustrious by the name of **Ingres**, whose talent was less powerful but more correct.

Sculpture became romantic with the work of **David d'Angers**, who was a friend of all the great writers of the time, and who excelled no less in modelling busts or medallions (Hugo, Lamartine, Balzac, Gœthe, etc.) than in monumental works (pediment of the Panthéon).

Like literary romanticism, artistic romanticism waned towards the middle of the century. With **Horace Vernet** and **Paul Delaroche** there was a return to historical painting, more exact if less vivid; and with **Decamps**, a return to exotic painting, particularly of the Orient (made fashionable by the poets). Finally true landscape triumphed, and here again it was literary influence which determined the condition of art; and **Millet**, **Dupré**, **Rousseau**, **Daubigny**, **Corot** painted landscapes which are "states of the soul."

But the introduction of realism into art must also be noted: after 1848, **Courbet** was the Balzac of painting, as **Manet** a soon after was to be its Emile Zola.

Then, towards the end of the century, the powerful and strange personality of **Puvis de Chavannes** appeared at about the same time with the symbolistic tendency in poetry (2).

**Sciences.** — The development of science in the nineteenth century was so grandiose and so complex, that it is sufficient to recall a few names or facts which exercised particular influence. — Astronomers like **Le Verrier**, mathematicians and physicists like **Ampère** and **Arago**, chemists like **Chevreul** and **Pasteur**, biologists like **Claude Bernard**, etc., continued to decipher the enigma of the external world or the mystery of life. Their discoveries revealed new sources of thought and poetry. In foreign countries **Darwin** and **Haeckel** set forth the problem of evolution; and all the economic, social and critical sciences were modified by the new methods. People dreamed of scientific criticism, scientific politics, scientific theology; it seemed as if they wished

(1) Concerning the definition of romanticist painting, and the mutual influence of artists and writers, read *L'Art français dans ses rapports avec la littérature au dix-neuvième siècle*, by M. S. ROCHEBLAVE, in the *Littérature* of PETIT DE JULLEVILLE (Colin), chap. xv, vol. VII, p. 747.

(2) Id., pp. 765-792.



not only to write, like Sainte-Beuve, "the natural history of minds", but dreamed of inventing instruments which might register imagination and talent.

Scientific applications created a rapidity of communication which power-



VIEW OF THE INSTITUTE OF FRANCE, UNDER THE EMPIRE

The old academies, done away with by the Revolution, were restored and grouped under the name of "Classes", by Napoleon, in one "Institute", which was lodged at the Palace of the Four Nations.

fully influenced the public mind, satisfying curiosity more quickly if more superficially.

## IX. — EXTERNAL INFLUENCES.

**English Influence.** — The Revolution had somewhat compromised the prestige of England in France, and Napoleon was her unyielding enemy. It is, notwithstanding from the first years of the century that the truly literary influence of England dates. Mme de Staël, in her *Littérature*, gives to England, and above all to Shakespeare, a preëminent rank; while Chateaubriand, who had lived for years in London, had studied Ossian and Milton. — This influence became powerful in the work of *Byron* (died 1824), who, though he imitat-

ed *René*, was imitated in his turn by all the romanticist poets (1). Along with him, **Walter Scott** (died 1832) gave Europe his innumerable novels, and awakened everywhere the feeling for local colour and history. — Meanwhile, **Shakespeare** was brought directly to France by English actors. In 1827-28, a troupe of London actors gave a series of Shakespearean representations, which revealed to Alexandre Dumas, Vigny, Hugo and Berlioz the greatest dramatic genius of all time (2). — Scott's novels were succeeded in French admiration by those of **Dickens** (died 1870) and **George Eliot** (died 1880), whose influence was realistic and moral. — Poets, like those of the Lake School (**Wordsworth**, **Coleridge**, **Southey**), and, — nearer native French sympathy, — **Tennyson** and **Swinburne**, helped the reaction against romanticism by producing models of familiar or symbolic poetry.

**Germany**, which had imitated France so extensively, up to the end of the eighteenth century, was about to turn the tables. We have already mentioned that *Werther*, translated in 1778, had met with great success. Gæthe's plays were less successful. But Schiller had an immediate influence upon mélodrama during the Revolution and the Empire, as well as upon romantic plays. Mme de Staël's *Allemagne*, made a strong impression upon public opinion, and created a desire to know the poets, philosophers and story-tellers of whom she spoke so well. In 1821, the publication began of the *Chefs-d'œuvre des théâtres étrangers*, in which **Goethe**, **Lessing**, **Kotzebue**, **Werner** figured beside Shakespeare and Calderon. The first dramatic effort of Dumas père was a *Fiesque* imitated from **Schiller**. *Faust* was translated in 1822; the *Contes d'Hoffmann* in 1829. Historians and critics were enthusiastic about **Herder** and **Niebuhr**. Victor Cousin travelled in Germany, and was initiated into the philosophy of **Kant**, **Fichte** and **Schelling**. **Henri Heine** settled in Paris, where he died in 1856. **Schlegel's** *Cours de littérature dramatique* was translated in 1814, and his ideas penetrated French criticism. Finally, German philology exercised, towards the end of the century, a predominant influence, and French scholars formed themselves in the school of **Diez**, **Mommsen** and **Curtius**.

**Italy**. — Among French works in which Italian influence is perceptible, should be mentioned *Corinne* by Mme de Staël (1807). The author had known **Monti** and **Alfieri** (died 1803). Ginguéné wrote in 1811 an *Histoire littéraire d'Italie*, and Sismondi in 1812 an *Histoire des littératures du Midi de l'Europe*. — At the same time Stendhal made Italy known in France by different critical works. Lamartine, in his *Premières Méditations*, is full of Italian memories, and Petrarch was one of his masters. — **Leopardi** published his poems in

(1) See E. ESTÈVE, *Byron et le Romantisme français*, Hachette, 1907.

(2) See CH.-M. DES GRANGES, *La Presse littéraire sous la Restauration* (*Mercure de France*, 1907, pp 355-362).

1818 ; and his influence, though already evident in the work of Alfred de Musset, was especially felt later, about 1850. **Manzoni** (died 1873) published his *Carmagnola*, a romantic play, in 1820, and his *Promessi Sposi* in 1827 ; — **Silvio Pellico's** *Prigioni* was translated as soon as it appeared, in 1833.

**Spain.** — There were affinities between French romanticism and Spanish literature. — In 1814, the *Romancero* was translated ; Don Quixote was retranslated several times. **Calderon** and **Lope de Vega's** masterpieces were published in the *Théâtre étranger*. — A Spanish tone was perceptible in several of Victor Hugo's plays, and in some pieces in *La Légende des siècles*. Mérimée copied Spain in his *Théâtre de Clara Gazul* (1825) Th. Gautier and Alex. Dumas wrote *Voyages en Espagne*.

— However, contemporary Spanish works were not so well known as those of England and Germany. Neither the eloquence of **Donoso Cortés**, nor the varied and picturesque talent of **Castelar** exercised any influence in France



HAMLET AND HORATIO WITH YORICK'S SKULL  
From the picture by Eugène Delacroix (1799-1863).

**Russian Literature.** — After 1860, another country furnished new ideas to transform or enrich French literature, namely Russia. Like Germany, Russia had long imitated France, but in the nineteenth century she freed herself from

this influence, producing great romantic poets like **Pouchkine** (died 1837), or



#### CLASSICIST AND ROMANTICIST CELEBRITIES IN 1833

From a lithograph by Planta.

Around Béranger, whose wished for pre-eminence must be noticed, the artist has grouped Chateaubriand, C. Delavigne, V. Hugo, A. Dumas, Lemerrier, Lamartine and Etienne.

**Lermontoff** (died 1841), novelists such as **Gogol** (died 1852), one of the masters of realism, whose *Nouvelles* were translated after 1845 and his *Ames mortes*



in 1848; — **Dostoïevsky** (died 1881), who develops, with the most striking psychological minuteness, the analysis of certain spiritual conditions (*Crime et Châtiment*), and who has left an unforgettable picture of Siberia (*Souvenirs de la Maison des Morts*); — **Tourgueniev** (died 1883), author of novels in which Russian society is described in the most penetrating manner, at once ideal and exact. With a clearer, a more European genius than the preceding writers, Tourgueniev lived for many years in Paris, where his works were immediately translated into French (*Journal d'un chasseur*, 1852; *Un Nid de Seigneurs*, 1859; *Terres vierges*, 1877). Finally **Tolstoï** (died 1910), produced a masterpiece in his historical novel *War and Peace*, 1864-69, and in his judicial novel *Resurrection*, 1900. — Their influence was both social and literary. They inspired French novelists and dramatists with theses on pity as a social factor, on the responsibilities of the rich and powerful with regard to the poor, etc. At the same time, they furnished models of minute, cold realism, absolutely objective, from which emanates, however, a powerful and mysterious poetry (4).

(4) E.-M. DE VOGUÉ, *Le Roman russe*, Plon, 1886.



PAGE ORNAMENT OF THE EMPIRE STYLE

Designed by Percier (1764-1838) and Fontaine (1762-1853).



ORNAMENTAL FRIEZE TAKEN FROM NAPOLEON I'S *Livre du Sacre*

Designed by Percier (1764-1838) and Fontaine (1762-1853).

## CHAPTER II.

### LITERATURE DURING THE REVOLUTION AND THE EMPIRE.

#### SUMMARY

1° French literature was similar in character during the Revolution and the Empire. It was dominated by **pseudo-classicism**. The influence of Chateaubriand and Mme de Staël was not felt until after 1815.

2° **DURING THE REVOLUTION**, may be cited : in **tragedy**, M.-J. Chénier, N. Lemercier, Ducis;—in **comedy**, Fabre d'Eglantine, Collin d'Harleville;—in **lyric poetry**, Rouget de Lisle.

3° **DURING THE CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE** : In **tragedy**, Luce de Lancival, Brifaut, Jouy, Raynouard;—In **comedy**, Picard, Alex. Dumas, Etienne;—**success of melodrama**;—in **lyric poetry**, Fontanes, Chénedollé, Millevoye;—**descriptive poetry**, Delille; in **history**, Daunou, Lacroix, Sismondi;—in **criticism**, Suard, La Harpe, Dussault, Feletz, Geoffroy.



DECORATED LETTER

taken from *Paul et Virginie*,  
Curmer edition, 1838.

If we except the orators, the journalists, and André Chénier, whom we have already noticed, the literature of the Revolution is less surprising by its poverty than by its imitative spirit. The same is true of the literature of the First Empire. It was merely a continuation of the eighteenth century. Under the Revolution, the theatre was inspired by current events, and sought to profit by its newly acquired liberty. But during the Empire, except for comedy and criticism, there was nothing. The despotism of the censor, the tyrannical protection of Napoleon, the absorption of the strongest minds by war or administration, explain the lack of initiative, and the emptiness of authors. Of course, there were two isolated geniuses, persecuted by the Empire — and whose decisive influence was in consequence delayed — who must be classed apart, Chateaubriand and Mme de Staël, as well as those who developed outside of France, like Joseph de Maistre, and some talents in the opposition, like Benjamin Constant.

Meanwhile, after the appearance of *Atala* in 1801, and of Mme de Staël's *Littérature* in 1800, the romanticist question arose. It was to be discussed for twenty years, before passing from Chateaubriand's prose and Mme de Staël's criticism into lyric poetry and drama.

## I. — DURING THE REVOLUTION (1789-1800).

1° **TRAGEDY.** — The first important date in the revolutionary drama was 1789, with **M. J. Chénier's** *Charles IX*, an "historical tragedy," a plea in favour of liberty and tolerance, which almost brought about a battle between the parterre and the boxes. This drama is composed altogether of long speeches; but it was precisely these tirades of Coligny, Guise and l'Hospital which called forth applause or protests. In Act IV, there is a fine scene which was to furnish the famous "blessing of the swords" to Scribe in his *Les Huguenots*. — Chénier produced later, and always successfully, *Henri VIII* (1791), *Calas* (1791), *Græchus* (1792), in which occurs the *mot*: "Laws, and not blood!", and *Fénelon ou les Religieuses de Cambrai* (1793), a play interesting for the history of Fénelon's renown in the eighteenth century. Chénier's *Tibère* was not played until 1844 (1).

(1) M.-J. Chénier (1764-1811) was a member of the Convention, of the Five Hundred and the Tribunat. Under the Empire, he became inspector-general of the University, composed several more tragedies, which were interdicted by the censor, and wrote a *Tableau de la littérature fran-*

**A. Arnault** (1766-1834) wrote *Marius à Minturnes* in 1791, a play characterized by manly simplicity, and a few other tragedies, the most original of which is *Blanche de Montcassin ou les Véniliens* (1798). It has an occasional touch of romance. But Arnault will live chiefly through his *Fables* (1812), in which occurs the famous short piece on *La Feuille*.

**Népomucène Lemercier** (1771-1840), of original temperament, and at time an innovator, achieved a triumph with his tragedy *Agamemnon* (1797), which still bears reading, and with his historical drama *Pinto* (1801), in which skill cannot be denied in the combination of different genres, — which foretells A. Duval and Scribe rather than Dumas père and Victor Hugo (1).

**Duclis** continued to produce adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, *Othello*, in 1792 and in 1793 his own play on an oriental subject, entitled *Abufar*. This is his most original production.

**2° COMEDY.** — The first important comedy was *Le Mariage de Figaro* (1784), of which we have already spoken. Fabre d'Eglantine's *Le Philinte de Molière* (1791) should also be cited; it was inspired by J.-J. Rousseau. In this play Philinte is no longer the likable philosopher, the indulgent man of the world, whom we believe him to be in *Le Misanthrope*, but a selfish and narrow-minded aristocrat, who only awakes from apathy when his own interest is at stake; Alceste is everybody's friend, the precursor, the avenger; and there is a lawyer who makes the stage of the Théâtre-Français into a tribune of the Constituent Assembly.

**Collin d'Harleville** (1755-1806), represents, on the contrary, the charming and witty classical comedy. With less force and fancy, he is an heir of Regnard, Piron and Gresset. His best plays, charmingly versified, and which were an agreeable change from pamphlet comedies, are *L'Optimiste* (1788) and *Le Vieux Célibataire* (1792).

It is difficult to define and class a mass of plays of circumstance, ephemeral and blatant productions, some of them courageous like *L'Ami des lois* by Laya (1793), some intended to flatter popular passions like *Les Victimes cloîtrées* by Monvel (1791), others produced by buffoonery and politics like *Madame Angot ou la Poissarde parvenue* by Maillot (1796), adaptations from which have lasted down to the present time; or the series of *Cadet-Roussel* by Aude, etc. These comprise an immense number of vaudevilles, farces, popular hits which constitute the living and truly *aristophanesque* part of the Revolutionary drama, in which every current event was hit off with unbridled audacity, but which has no interest except as a history of morals and manners (2).

*caise de 1789 à 1808*, which is a curious document of pseudo-classical criticism. Accused of having allowed his brother André to perish, he replied to the public with his fine epistle *Sur la calomnie*, in 1806 (*Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 801).

(1) Lemercier composed a long poem, *La Panhypocrisiade*, part epic, part satire. He was disgraced under the Empire.

(2) See—for all these pieces—*Le Théâtre de la Révolution*, by H. WELSCHINGER (Charavay, 1881).



3° In the domain of **LYRIC POETRY**, we have already noted Lebrun. But the true lyricism of the time was found in a few revolutionary songs, like *Le Chant du départ* by M. J. Chénier, set to music by Méhul in 1794, and above all *La Marseillaise* by **Rouget de Lisle** (1792).

## II. — UNDER THE CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE (1800-1814).

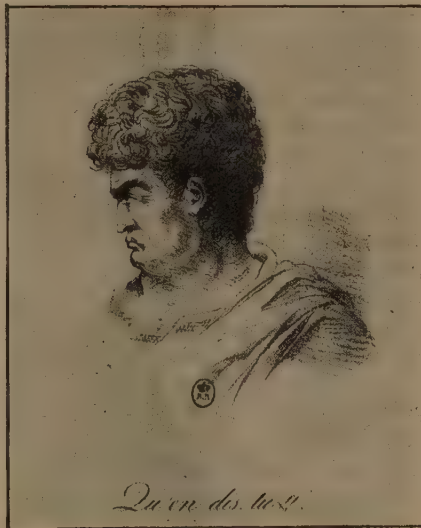
1° **TRAGEDY**. — Under the Empire the tragic repertory was in favour. Napoleon liked tragedies, and great actors like Talma, Mlle Duchesnois, Mlle Georges, reflected brilliance upon the least important representations. They acted Corneille, Racine, Voltaire, Crébillon, and a number of eighteenth century plays which seem to us insupportable;—but we have experienced romanticism!—It is true that this repertory was watched and corrected by the censor, who eliminated, according to the master's will and to circumstances, every annoying allusion (1).

Among the novelties, *Hector*, by **Luce de Lancival** (1809), was regarded as a masterpiece. A professor of rhetoric at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand, Luce rhymed rather tamely, a few scenes from the *Iliad*: he received a pension of 6,000 francs and the Cross of the Legion of Honour.

**Brifaut** had written a *Don Sanche*, but as there was then war with Spain, he was asked to transfer his subject to antiquity, and made from it his *Ninus II* (1813).

**Jouy**, who had been an officer in the Indies, produced a *Tippo-Saib* (1813), in which the reader may seek vainly for the least local colour. The same may be said of Lemierre's *La Veuve du Malabar*.

The most deservedly successful tragedy was **Raynouard's** *Les Templiers* (1805); but this success was not repeated in *Les États de Blois* in 1810. Raynouard, at least, sought subjects in national history, and so far was a disciple of Voltaire and



TALMA IN THE ROLE OF NÉRON  
From a lithograph.

(1) Cf. H. WELSHINGER, *La Censure sous le premier Empire*, 1882.

De Belloy. He was not the only one, and the romanticists were not the first to take themes from modern history, only they liberated historical tragedy from the galling yoke of the unities,—in this as, we shall show elsewhere, lay their originality (1).

## 2<sup>o</sup> COMEDY.

—Although closely watched by the censor, comedy under the Empire continued to display some vitality.

**Picard** (1769-1828) had begun, during the Revolution, with a few plays founded on circumstances. In 1801, he produced a remarkable satire on stock-jobbing in his *Duhautcours*, and in that same year, his play *La Petite Ville*, which is the most famous. Until then, he had been

an actor at the Louvois theatre. He became its director, and continued to produce a number of comedies, the best of which are: *Les Marionnettes* (1806) *Les Ricochets* (1807), *Les Capitulations de conscience* (1809), etc. He wrote more under the Restoration, when his chief successes were *Les Deux Philibert* (1816) and *Les Trois Quartiers* (1827).—Picard possessed genuine talent; he knew how



A PARADE IN THE BOULEVARD OF THE TEMPLE, UNDER THE EMPIRE

From an old print.

(1) RAYNOUARD (1761-1836) is chiefly famous for beginning the study of Romance linguistics and literature.

to construct a plot, and to subordinate some characters to others (see *Les Ricochets*); and he observed the little eccentricities of his day with mischievous



A SCENE FROM A MELODRAMA, UNDER THE RESTORATION

*From a lithograph by Gué.*

*Le Mont Savage*, melodrama taken by Pixérécourt from the *Solitaire*, famous novel by Viscount d'Arlincourt, recounts the last and apocryphal adventures of Charles the Bold: the Duke de Bourgogne, who has miraculously escaped the disaster of Nancy, withdraws to the Swiss mountains, where, leading a charitable life, but mysterious and full of caprice, he passes for a demon or an enchanter. He becomes enamoured of a young girl, Elodie, the child of one of his former victims; this love causes Elodie the most terrible fights until the day when she shares it and abandons herself to it. The Solitaire and Elodie are going to be married when the past of Charles the Bold is discovered. Elodie, who persists no less in her love, expires at the foot of the altar. The Solitaire, full of yearning, and having accomplished his penitence, soon follows her to death.

accuracy. If he could have followed up the vein he had opened in his *Duhautcours*, instead of being obliged to return to trivial subjects through fear of the censor, he might have been the Dancourt of his day.

**Alexandre Duval** (1767-1842) was the true predecessor of Scribe and Dumas père, by the ease and ingenuity of his plots, and especially because he created



historical comedy in France, such as it was understood by the author of the *Demoiselles de Saint-Cyr* and the author of the *Verre d'eau*. He produced in 1802 *Édouard en Écosse*, which was suppressed after its second representation because of its allusions; then *Le Menuisier de Livonie* (1805), about Peter the Great, *La Jeunesse de Henri V* (1806), *Le Faux Stanislas* (1809), etc. The public became accustomed to seeing great men represented on the stage, and took pleasure in the reconstitution,—though still very imperfect,—of an historical milieu. Duval also wrote some comedies of manners (*Le Chevalier d'industrie*, 1809), but in that genre is inferior to Picard.

**Etienne** (1778-1845). — Etienne, who under the Empire was press censor, and who, after becoming a liberal deputy under the Restoration, was loud for the liberty of the press, at first achieved distinction by some short plays in which the new eccentricities of a parvenu society were wittily observed and described: *Le Pacha de Suresne* (1802), *La Petite École des Pères* (1803), etc. In 1810, he produced a long comedy in five acts, in verse, called *Les Deux Gendres*, the success of which won him a seat in the French Academy. But he was accused of having copied a play written in the seventeenth century by a Jesuit, entitled *Conaxa*. A quarrel resulted, which the idleness of the critics and the public led them to exaggerate. In fact, Etienne had used the right of every writer to take up an old subject—that of the father who despoils himself for his children and is a victim of their ingratitude, and who invents a stratagem for regaining possession of his fortune. Etienne's fault was to pretend ignorance at first of the seventeenth century play, but it was chiefly to have written a mediocre comedy.

Etienne was a sarcastic and witty pamphleteer in his articles in the *Constitutionnel* and in his *Lettres sur Paris*, published in *La Minerve*.

3° Finally, we must consider the success of **MELODRAMA** under the Consulate and the Empire. This was popular tragedy, with an historical or romantic subject, uncurbed by rules, and allowing, to the point of incoherence, an admixture of genres. **Guilbert de Pixérécourt** (1773-1844) achieved great success with his *Victor ou l'Enfant de la forêt* (1798), *Celina ou l'Enfant du mystère* (1801), *Les Ruines de Babylone* (1818), etc. He had enormous fecundity of invention, and opened the way to the romantic drama. He had been surnamed “le Corneille des Boulevards”.—At the same time, **Caigniez** (1762-1842) (the “Racine des Boulevards”), wrote *Le Jugement de Salomon* (1802), *Les Enfants du Bûcheron* (1809), *La Pie voleuse* (1815), etc.

4° **EPIC POETRY** flourished under the Empire. One might expect that the poets drew their inspiration from the great military and political events of the time; but, **Luce de Lancival** wrote *Achille à Scyros*; **Baour-Lormian** wrote *L'Atlantide*; **Creusé de Lesser**; *Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde*, etc.



5° **LYRIC POETRY.** — Under the Empire, a few elegiac poets should be mentioned, were it only to show the relationship between André Chénier and the romanticists.

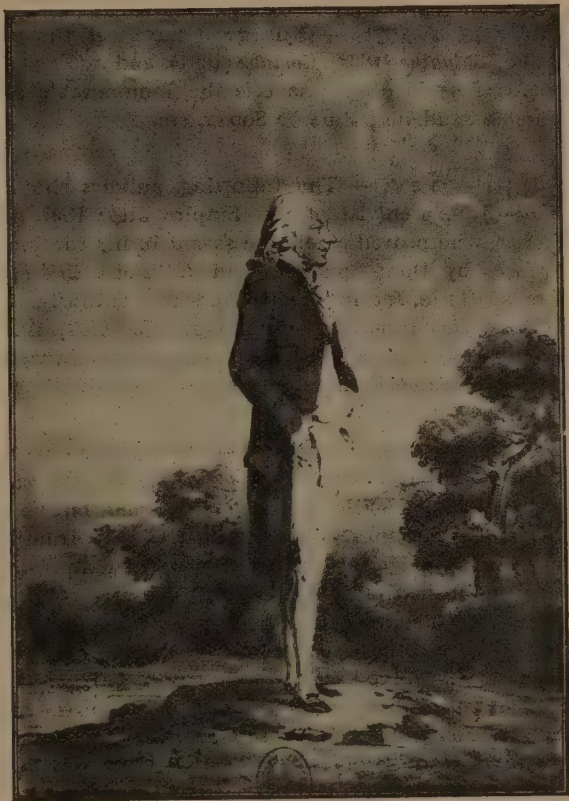
**Fontanes** (1757-1821), a better critic than poet, wrote some rather laborious pieces, but in a pure taste, and evincing at times profound feeling, such as *La Chartreuse de Paris*, *Les Tombeaux de Saint-Denis*, *Les Stances à Chateaubriand sur les Martyrs*, *Le Jour des Morts*, etc.

**Chénedollé** (1769-1833) wrote a poem on *Le Génie de l'homme*, but especially some *Études poétiques* (1820), in which there are a few *Iamariennes* pieces.

**Millevoye** (1782-1816) is still famous for his *Chute des feuilles* and *Le Poète mourant*.

## 6° **DESCRIPTIVE POETRY**

aged everywhere during this anti-poetic period.—The choir-master was **Delille** (1738-1813). A professor and a good Latin scholar, he achieved wide renown by his translation of Virgil's *Georgics* (1769), for which he was given the chair of Latin poetry in the Collège de France, and a seat in the French Academy. In 1782 he published *Les Jardins*; then *L'Homme des Champs* (1800), *L'Imagination* (1806), *Les Trois Règnes de la nature* (1809), *La Conversation* (1812). No author was more in fashion. People forced their way into the salons to hear him read his verses; and when he died in 1813, his funeral was a national ceremony like



ABBÉ DELILLE BEFORE NATURE

From a drawing by Fauvel engraved in colour.

that of Victor Hugo.—In reality, Delille is not altogether to be scorned. He wrote verse with ease and often with precision, and even his periphrases are interesting when considered as a display of wit. He was no poet, but a very skilful versifier.

**7° THE NOVEL.** — The great novels of the period are *Atala* (1801), *René* (1804), *Delphine* (1802), *Corinne* (1807), and *Adolphe* (1816). Besides these masterpieces, it is useless to cite the innumerable productions of Mme Cottin, Mme de Krudener, Mme de Souza, etc.

**8° HISTORY.** — The following authors should be mentioned: **Daunou** (1761-1840), archivist of the Empire after 1807, professor at the Collège de France, who proved a genuine savant in his continuation of *Les Historiens de la France*, by Dom Bouquet, and *L'Histoire littéraire* of the Benedictines;—**Lacretelle le Jeune** (1766-1835), who was the first to write, in 1806, a *Précis de la Révolution française*;—**Sismondi** (1733-1842), author of *L'Histoire des républiques italiennes* and of *L'Histoire des Français*, written under the Empire and published under the Restoration and Louis-Philippe.

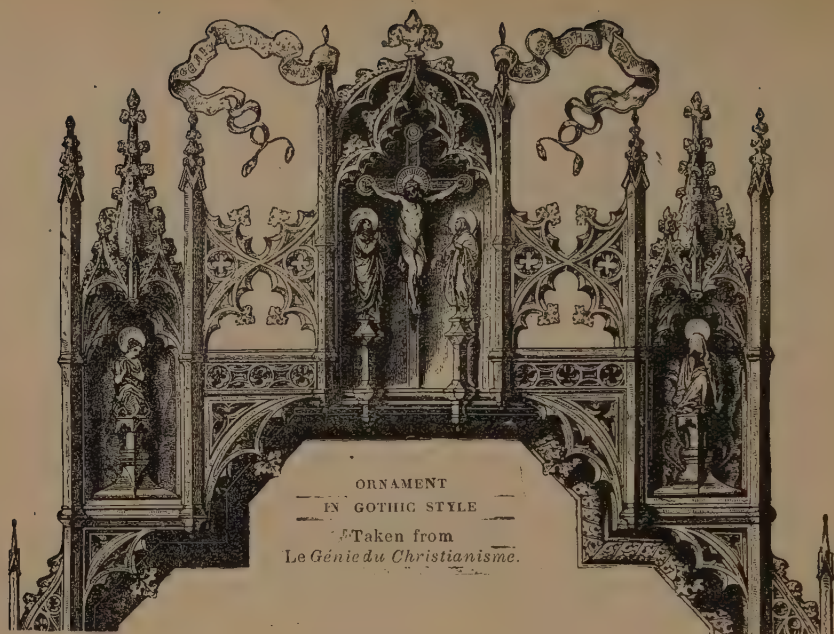
**9° CRITICISM.**—**Suard** (1753-1817) is the true representative of eighteenth century criticism; he had worked on the *Encyclopédie*, and until 1810 was editor of *Le Publiciste*. His manner is cold, but he lacks neither intelligence, finesse nor elegance.—**La Harpe** (died 1803) from 1793 to 1803 gave his public lectures at the Lycée Marbeuf, in the faubourg Saint-Honoré.—**Joubert** (1754-1824) published nothing, but through his conversation and advice to his friends wielded an influence upon the literature of his time. His *Pensées* and his *Correspondance* were published in 1842.

In the *Journal des Débats*, founded in 1789, appeared most original critics: **Hoffmann**, subtle and piquant; **Dussault**, solid and heavy; **Féletz**, delicate and ironic; **Boissonade**, a very learned Hellenist and a wit; and, above all, **Geoffroy** (1743-1814), who wrote the *feuilleton* for fourteen years, reviewing the whole dramatic production of the Empire, and judging it with the greatest severity. His merit lies in having renewed the criticism of the theatrical repertory. He left excellent articles on Corneille, Racine, Molière, parts of which will always be quoted for their sense and firmness. He contributed to discrediting the tragedies of Voltaire and his disciples, and to disencumber the stage of the pseudo-classical works.

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### CHAPTER III.

## AUTHORS WHO INITIATED THE NEW RENAISSANCE.

CHATEAUBRIAND. — MADAME DE STAEL.

#### SUMMARY

1° CHATEAUBRIAND (1768-1848), after dreaming away his youth at Combourg, travelled in America, and emigrated to London; he returned to France in 1800, published *Atala*, *Le Génie du Christianisme* (1801-1802); visited Italy, Greece and the Orient, and published *Les Martyrs* in 1809. Under the Restoration, he launched into politics, became minister and ambassador, and retired after 1830. His temperament was distrustful and proud.—He saw and felt, himself, what he has described and analysed.

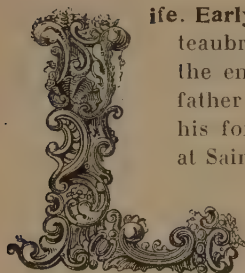
2° He restored the Gothic cathedral to favour, insomuch as he revived the religious sense in the French and their taste for the Middle Ages :—he made



nature better known : his descriptions are subjective ; he invented modern melancholy : his *René* incarnates the *mal du siècle* ; he renewed criticism, by substituting the historical and æsthetic points of view for the dogmatism of the classicists.—As a writer, he is oratorical and poetical. In all the genres, he is the master of the nineteenth century.

3<sup>e</sup> Mme DE STAEL (1766-1817), daughter of Necker, was persecuted under the Empire, and obliged to exile herself at Coppet ; she travelled in Italy and Germany.—She published *La Littérature* in 1800, in which she develops the relationship between letters and society, and initiates France into the beauties of Shakespeare ; novels, *Delphine* (1802) and *Corinne* (1807), and above all *L'Allemagne* (1811), a work in which she introduced to the French, in a personal and vivid manner, the great writers and philosophers beyond the Rhine. Her style, a sort of animated conversation, is that of a publicist.

## I. — CHATEAUBRIAND.



DECORATED LETTER  
of the XIX century

**Life. Early years and Youth** (1768-1786). — The illustrious Chateaubriand family had lost most of its former splendour towards the end of the eighteenth century. René de Chateaubriand, father of the writer, was a man of grim energy, who sought his fortune in the West Indies and then set up as a shipowner at Saint-Malo. He had sworn to himself to restore his family position, and he kept his word. Married in 1753 to Apolline de Bédée, he had ten children ; the first four died in infancy ; of the other six, three became famous : Julie, who was Mme de Farcy ; Lucile, Mme de Caud ; and the tenth, and feeblest, whom his exhausted mother left to the care of an old servant, François-Auguste.

François-Auguste de Chateaubriand was born at Saint-Malo on September 4, 1768. He passed his first years idling about the docks, and was then sent to the college of Dol, later to that of Rennes, where he showed himself a very intelligent and very independent student. Gifted in mathematics, he first went to Brest to pass his examination as midshipman ; but he thought he had an ecclesiastical vocation, and shut himself up for several months in the college of Dinan. After this he lived for two years in the solitude of the château de Combourg, with his father, his mother and Lucile. Chateaubriand has told us himself, in his *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, what dreams and hallucinations filled these two years (1). Lucile, neglected like himself, was the confidant of

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 901.

his dreams; she had a romantic and not very healthy sensibility, which Chateaubriand remembered when he drew Amélie and Velléda. He had inherited his father's fondness for travel, and he already felt drawn towards unknown countries, when he suddenly changed his mind and accepted a commission as 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant in the regiment of Navarre, reaching his post at Cambrai early in 1786. In September of the same year his father's death recalled him to Combours.

**Sojourn in Paris (1786-1791).** — Instead of returning to Cambrai he went to Paris, where he obtained a commission as captain of cavalry, and where, through his brother, Count de Chateaubriand, and his sister Julie, Mme de Farcy, he was presented at court. Fashionable society bored him, and his preference was for literary company. He knew the poet Ecouchard-Lebrun (*alias* Lebrun-Pindare, the bombastic author of the Ode on the vessel *Le Vengeur*); the "moralist" Chamfort, one of the most wittily wicked men of that time; Parny, the epicurean elegiac poet, whose work foretold that of Lamartine; Guinguené the critic whose heavy dogmatism he was to experience in the case of *Atala* and the *Génie*; La Harpe, then at the height of his success as a fashionable lecturer; Flins, the type of the literary bohemian, and through him Fontanes, who later made him return to France and encouraged him to publish his masterpiece. In 1790 Chateaubriand was quite happy to publish in the *Almanach des Muses* a copy of verses written in the most insipid taste of the eighteenth century. What had he become, in frequenting the salons and literary cafés of Paris? A writer as mediocre as he was *distingué*. But this society, destroyed and dispersed by the first events of the Revolution, exercised but a brief influence upon him.

**Voyage to America (1791-1792).** — In talking with M. de Malesherbes, his dreams of travel began to haunt him once more. He resolved to set out to discover a passage north of America, and sailed from Saint-Malo on April 8, 1791. (He was back again as early as January 2, 1792.)

Chateaubriand has described his travels in America, and exploited them in his works, in every manner and form. After his Combours impressions, those he received in America were the strongest and most decisive. He did not, however, actually accomplish all of the itinerary he claimed. M. J. Bédier (1) has proved that Chateaubriand only visited the region of the Great Lakes, and used, without scruple, in order to describe the parts of the country he himself had not seen, French and English narratives like those of P. Charlevoix and Bartram. However that may be, he brought back from America

(1) JOSEPH BÉDIER, *Études critiques*, Paris, Colin, 1903 (p. 125 : *Chateaubriand en Amérique : vérité et fiction*).

sensations and local colour with which to enrich French literature for a whole century.

On receiving news of the arrest of the king at Varennes, he returned suddenly, married during the journey Mlle Céleste Buisson de la Vigne, a charming



COMBOURG CASTLE

From a lithograph of the Romanticist epoch.

woman with the heart of a stoic, and then hastily joined the army of the *émigrés*.

**Exile in London (1793-1800).** — Wounded at the siege of Thionville, he took refuge in Brussels, then in Jersey and London, where, to earn a livelihood, he worked for a bookseller. He nearly starved to death in this city to which, twenty-five years later, he was to return as French ambassador. It was during his stay in London that he published his first work, *L'Essai sur les Révolutions*, a book full of anti-Christian pessimism, and which in no way foretold the religious apologist he was later seen to be (1797). At this same period he wrote a long book of memories of his American travels, a regular mine of impressions from which he was soon to gather material for his *Atala*, *René*, and much later for

his book entitled *Les Natchez*, which is composed of "leavings." He was still in London when, in 1799, he received a letter from his sister Julie announcing the death of his mother; and at the moment when that letter reached him, Julie herself was dead. The last wish of Mme de Chateaubriand was that her son should return to the religion of his infancy. He was influenced by divine grace. "I did not yield," he says, "to any supernatural lights; my conviction came from my heart; I wept and I believed." From that time he conceived the plan for his *Génie du Christianisme*.

**Under the Consulate and the Empire (1800-1814).** — Fontanes had persuaded Bonaparte to remove the name of Chateaubriand from the list of *émigrés*, and he returned into France on May 8, 1800. He frequented the salon of Mme de Beaumont; and published in 1801 *Atala*, a fragment detached from his next work;—and on April 14, 1802, four days before the proclamation of the Concordat, his *Le Génie du Christianisme*. Bonaparte, wishing to attach to himself a man who served so well his own plans for social restoration, appointed Chateaubriand Secretary to the Embassy at Rome (1803), and the year after Minister Plenipotentiary in the Valais. But the execution of the Duke d'Enghien created an irreparable misunderstanding between Chateaubriand and the First Consul. The former resigned, and started once more on his travels in order to study the landscapes and ruins of the country where he intended placing the action of his book *Les Martyrs*. Of this trip we have a detailed narrative in his *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*.—He went by Venice and Trieste, visited Greece, Constantinople, and Palestine, returning by Tunis, Carthage and Spain. This journey lasted nearly a year (July, 1806 to June, 1807). On his return he bought a country house, La Vallée-aux-Loups, near Aulnay, where he settled down to finish *Les Martyrs*, which appeared in 1809. The *Itinéraire* was published in 1811. Meanwhile, Chateaubriand set up a more and more pronounced opposition to the Empire. He contributed to *Le Mercure* an article containing menacing allusions (1); and being appointed successor to M.-J. Chénier in the French Academy, he composed a discourse which the Imperial authorities would not let him deliver.

**Under the Restoration (1814-1830).** — On the fall of Napoleon, he published a pamphlet entitled: *De Buonaparte et des Bourbons* (1815), which "was worth an army to Louis XVIII;" but, made a peer of France, he joined the opposition and wrote, in 1816, *La Monarchie selon la charte*, which drew upon the writer the persecutions of the minister Decazes. After the death of the Duke de Berry in 1820, Chateaubriand was appointed ambassador to Berlin; and in 1822, ambassador to London; in the same year he represented France at the

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 909.





CHATEAUBRIAND UNDER THE EMPIRE

From the original painting by Girodet (1767-1824) and lithographed by Aubry.

Congress of Verona, and became Minister of Foreign Affairs in Villèle's cabinet. Despite the success of the expedition to Spain, his situation grew worse, as neither the king nor Villèle liked him, and on June 6, 1824, he was "relieved of his duties." Deeply hurt, Chateaubriand threw himself again into the opposition ranks, led, in the *Journal des Débats*, a violent campaign against Villèle and helped to overthrow him. Under the Martignac ministry he was appointed (January, 1828) ambassador to Rome; but the fall of Charles X marked his definitive return to private life.

**Last Years (1830-1848).** — In 1826, Chateaubriand had published a complete edition of his works; in 1834, he produced his *Voyage en Amérique*. In 1831, he published his *Études historiques*; in 1836, his *Essai sur la Littérature anglaise*; and in 1844, *La Vie de Rancé*. After this he devoted himself entirely to his *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, begun in 1811 at the Vallée-aux-Loups, and written by fits and starts until 1846. He much frequented at the time the salon of Mme Récamier at the Abbaye-aux-Bois, where he held a sort of royal position. As he had become quite poor, he "mortgaged his tomb," by selling to a society of stockholders his *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, with the understanding that they should not appear until after his death. But, Émile de Girardin began the publication of them in *La Presse* in February, 1848; and it was only on July 4 of that same year that Chateaubriand died, in Paris, in a house in the rue du Bac which now bears the number 120. He had asked to be buried opposite Saint-Malo, his native town, in the island of the Grand-Bé, a grandiose sepulchre which was appropriate for his genius.

**Character.** — Chateaubriand has portrayed himself in his works, sometimes indirectly, as in *Atala*, *René*, *Les Natchez*, sometimes directly as in the *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*. His character presents a singular mixture of cold disdain and lyrical enthusiasm. "I am reserved," he says; "my soul always has a tendency to close its door... Adventurous and yet orderly and methodical, there has never been a being at the same time more fanciful and more positive than I, more fiery and more icy." He makes René say: "Life bores me; I have always been devoured by boredom." He himself says, "I have yawned all my life, and carried my heart in a sling." His life was constantly allied with all the greatest events of the century, and his works had their origin in reality as much as dream. He says, "It was in the woods that I made songs about the woods, on shipboard that I painted the ocean, in camps that I spoke of battle, in exile that I learned what exile is, in courts, affairs, assemblies that I studied princes, politics and laws." (*Mémoires d'outre-tombe*.)

**Chateaubriand's Works.** — We cannot analyse in detail all of Chateau-

briand's works (1); but we think it necessary to mention them all, each at its own date, with especial notice only of the principal ones.

**L'Essai sur les révolutions** (1797).—In this singular book, the young émigré wished to find the relation between former revolutions and the French revolution. But, of this immense plan, he only published two volumes, the first devoted to the Republican revolutions in Greece, the second to Philip and Alexander. The *Essai* is no longer read. Yet nothing could be more curious than this medley, in which the most unexpected comparisons—sometimes the most true—show us the point of view of an eighteenth century man as to past, present and future events. But the chapters which ought to be read by all who thoroughly study Chateaubriand, are those at the end of the second part upon the objections against Christianity (especially chapter xxxix to chapter lv). It is not true to say that Chateaubriand, in this *Essai*, proves himself a disciple of the Encyclopædists; in a way he abominates them, and he reproaches them with having destroyed everything without replacing anything. Doubtless, he then believed in the decadence and near disappearance of Christianity; but this consideration caused him anguish, and he entitled his last chapter: *Quelle sera la religion qui remplacera le christianisme?* This question, left for the moment without reply, he was to answer before long.

**Atala** (1801).—Atala was intended simply as an episode to illustrate the chapter of the *Génie* entitled “*Harmonies de la religion chrétienne avec les scènes de la nature et les passions du cœur humain*,” and was published separately in May, 1801. “Like the dove of the ark,” Atala went forth to reconnoitre the land, and returned bearing a branch of laurel. In the preface to the first edition, Chateaubriand explains to us that this work is detached from *Les Natchez*, the manuscript of which he had left in London.—*Atala* opens with a Prologue. After a description of the banks of the Meschacébé (2) (the Mississippi), the author introduces old Chactas, a savage of the Natchez tribe, who has visited France and knows the court of Louis XIV. One moonlight night, seated on the stern of a pirogue, he recounts the adventures of his youth to a Frenchman, René.—The narrative is divided into four parts: *Les chasseurs*, *Les laboureurs*, *Le drame*, *Les funérailles*. Chactas, after the defeat of his tribe by the Muscogulges, flies to Saint-Augustine, to the house of a Spaniard, Lopez. But one day he is overcome by the wish to see his native country, is captured by his former enemies, and condemned to be burned. Meanwhile, a young Christian girl of the tribe, Atala, loves Chactas. She cuts his bonds, and flies with him through the forest. Chactas and Atala make their way northward for nearly a month. They finally meet a missionary, Father Aubry, in whose grotto they take refuge from a terrible storm. Chactas asks the priest to instruct him in the Christian religion, and to bless his marriage with Atala. But the young girl, whom her dying mother had consecrated to God, not wishing to break her vow, and made desperate by her love, poisons herself. Epilogue.—This tale had a prodigious success, which may be measured by the praises as well as the severities and raillery of contemporary criticism (3).

(1) CHATEAUBRIAND, *Œuvres choisies*, (by CHARLES FLORISOONE, Hatier, 1913). This volume includes extracts from all the works of Chateaubriand, arranged in historical order, with a biography of the author.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 896.

(3) The fourth edition of *Le Génie du Christianisme*, published by Ballanche, at Lyons, in 1804, devotes the ninth and last volume to the different articles written for or against the work. In pp. 1-87 are the reviews of *Atala*: pp. 91-260 those of *Le Génie*.

**Le Génie du Christianisme** (1802).—We have already said under what circumstances the *Génie du Christianisme* appeared (1). Following is a brief analysis of this work, which includes four parts, each divided into six books :—*First part : Dogmes et Doctrine.* Here Chateaubriand examines the substance of Christianity : mysteries, sacraments, Holy Scripture, the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. This theological section is not the most original nor will be the most durable of the work. But we should not forget that it defined Chateaubriand's position to the public which he wished to reach; and to convince us of this we have only to read his first chapter, which serves as an Introduction, and the preface written in 1828. As he had, above all, to react against the encyclopædic and Voltairian spirit, which had cast ridicule upon religion, declaring it absurd, anti-natural, anti-poetic, Chateaubriand set himself to explain its human beauty and fitness. The theologians had their own method; but it was not suitable for a society formed by the eighteenth century and the Revolution... "They established," Chateaubriand says, "very solidly, without doubt, the verities of faith; but this manner of reasoning, excellent in the seventeenth century, when the subject was not contested, was no longer of value in our days. It was necessary to follow the opposite direction, to go back from the effect to the cause, to prove, not that Christianity is excellent because it comes from God, but that it proceeds from God because it is excellent (2)." Applied to dogmas, this "apologetics" is feeble, but is efficacious when it comes to the external manifestations of Christianity.—*Second part : Poétique du christianisme.* Chateaubriand examines successively the Christian epics (Dante, Tasso, Milton, Voltaire); characters in tragedies and epics (Racine, Voltaire, Tasso); the passions (Didon, Phèdre, Julie). Here he interpolates, in book IV, the episode of *René* (another fragment from *Les Natchez*): René, exiled among the Natchez, relates to old Chactas and Father Souel, a missionary, the adventures which led him to quit his own country. This episode is an example which follows the chapter entitled *Du Vague dans les passions*. René is the most celebrated and significant incarnation of romantic melancholy (3). We shall revert to this again. Finally, in books V and VI of the second part, Chateaubriand takes up the question of the Christian marvellous, holding, against Boileau and the pseudo-classicists of his time, that here again Christianity is superior to paganism.—*The third part* is entitled : *Beaux-arts et Littérature*, and is merely a prolongation of the preceding. The author examines the characteristic beauties of Christian art. In the first book, chapter viii is the celebrated passage on Gothic churches. Then follow *La philosophie*, *L'Histoire*, *L'Eloquence*. In book V, *Les Harmonies de la religion chrétienne, avec les scènes de la nature et les passions du cœur humain*; as an example, in book VI, *Atala* (4).—*Fourth part : Culte.* A study of the external manifestations of religion (churches, vestments, hymns, prayers, bells, etc.), the clergy, missions, chivalric orders. Book VI is a direct reply to the *Encyclopédie* and to *L'Essai sur les mœurs*, and is entitled *Services rendus à la société par le clergé et la religion chrétienne en général*, and comprises thirteen chapters (hospitals, education, universities, agriculture, commerce, etc.). In reading this part of the book we understand why Chateaubriand used as an epigraph for his *Génie* these words of Montesquieu : "Admirable thing! The Christian religion, which seems to have no other object than our happiness in the next life, already enables us to be happy here below." (*Esprit des lois*, XXIV, 3). Finally, the last chapter bears a title which sums up the whole spirit of the work : *Quel serait aujourd'hui l'état de la société si le christianisme n'eût pas paru sur la terre?* (5).

(1) In this famous title, the word *Génie* signifies : essential nature (Latin, *ingenium*). The works could have been called *De l'Esprit du Christianisme*.

(2) *Génie du Christianisme*, first part, chap. 1. *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 881.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 906.

(4) We shall return later to Chateaubriand's *poétique*.

(5) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, pp. 396-402; 2nd cycle, pp. 876-893.



**Les Martyrs** (1809).—Chateaubriand explains very well in his preface why and how he composed *Les Martyrs*; he wished to prove, by an example, the superiority of the Christian over the pagan marvellous. In order to give more force and fairness to his position, he brings the two religions into comparison by forcing himself to use, in turn, the resources of the two different marvellous. He also says in this Preface: "I began *Les Martyrs* at Rome in the year 1802, a few months after the publication of the *Génie du Christianisme*. Since then I have never stopped work upon it. The extracts made from various authors are so considerable that for the books on the Franks and the Gauls alone (books VI, VII, IX and X), I have gathered enough material for two large volumes. Finally, not satisfied with all these studies, I have journeyed to see the regions and places I wished to describe. If my work should lack every other merit, it would at least have the interest resulting from a journey made to the most famous places in history."—So, there are three separate things to consider in *Les Martyrs*: a story, a literary thesis and descriptions; its object is to bring into as close opposition as possible the christian and pagan religion. The action takes place towards the end of the third century, at the time



THE CORONATION OF CHARLES X AT RHEIMS

From a lithograph of Leroy and Adam, taken from the *Libre du Sacre* of Charles X.

of the persecution by Diocletian. Cymodocée, a young Pagan girl, daughter of Demodocus who is the last of the Homerides and priest in the temple of Homer in Messina, loses her way in a wood. She finds Eudore, asleep beside a fountain. Eudore, a young Christian, son of Lasthénès, takes back the young girl to the house of Demodocus (book I). In order to thank Eudore and his family, Demodocus and Cymodocée repair to the house of Lasthénès, whom they find gathering the harvest with his sons

and his servants (book II). Book III carries the reader to Heaven, where the Deity declares that he chooses Eudore and Cymodocée as victims; their blood will save other Christians. At the request of his guests Eudore undertakes to relate his past life and his exploits. (This narrative extends from book IV to book XI; and this plan is similar to that of the *Odyssey* and the *Eneid*). Eudore, at the age of sixteen, has been sent as a hostage to Rome, and while there forgets his religion. He is with the Roman army on the banks of the Rhine, takes part in the battle against the Franks (book VI), is wounded, becomes the slave of Pharamond, returns to the court of Constantius at Rome, and is appointed commandant of Armorica. Episode of Velléda (books IX and X).—Meanwhile, the narrative has been interrupted, in book VIII, by another marvellous interlude, whose scene this time is Hades.—Eudore finally describes his public penitence, his journey to Egypt, and his return to his father (book XI).—Eudore's narrative has deeply moved Cymodocée, who declares to her father that she wishes to become a Christian and marry the son of Lasthénès. Demodocus consents, in order to save his son from Hieroclès, governor of Achaïa, Eudore leaves for Rome, while Cymodocée goes to Jerusalem to place herself under the protection of Helen, mother of Constantine (book XIV). At Rome, all the preparations for the persecution are described; Hades manifests its joy (book XVIII). Cymodocée, who has been baptised in Jerusalem, rejoins Eudore at Rome. Here follow more marvellous episodes—purgatory, the exterminating angel, Satan (books XXI, XXII, XXIII). Cymodocée is delivered, but she runs to the amphitheatre to Eudore, and dies with him. At this instant, a voice is heard from Heaven saying: "The gods go." Constantine is conqueror, and proclaims the Christian religion throughout the Empire (book XXIV).—So far as regards the thesis, it is easy to see how false and useless the marvellous interludes are. The passages devoted to Heaven and hell, in which the Deity, the Virgin, the angels and Satan speak, only interrupt the human action without explaining it. The story and the marvellous incidents spoil each other. Chateaubriand, powerfully evoking the real past in his portrayal of Rome, of Jerusalem, Greece, Gaul, the catacombs, druidical forests, and the Franks, never realised, as an imitator of Dante and Milton, that the marvellous must have a Biblical or allegorical background. When historical characters are placed amidst geographical and archaeological descriptions, the marvellous can only be subjective; it must come from the soul of the characters and project itself outside them: Macbeth alone sees the ghost of Banquo. In the first book of the *Martyrs*, the meeting between Cymodocée and Eudore is a masterpiece in the employment of this marvellous and the scenes in the catacombs and the circus, and the episode of Velléda, may be praised for the same merit.—All the other scenes in which the marvellous is employed are artificial.

**Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem** (1811).—With the sketches from which he had done the finished pictures in *Les Martyrs*, Chateaubriand composed this book, one of those which were received with the greatest favour by his contemporaries, and have to-day lost their interest least. The accuracy and variety of the descriptions, the powerful evocation of Greek antiquity, the highly coloured feeling for the Orient, the truly unique admixture of objective reality and personal poetry, give this work a singular charm. Between the gray mosaics of the *Jeune Anacharsis* and the dazzling pictures of Pierre Loti, the *Itinéraire* remains a masterpiece among descriptive works. In 1811 current events also went far to increase its success: sympathy for enslaved Greece began to awake in Europe, and the *Itinéraire* was the first manifestation of the philhellenic movement in France.

**Les Natchez** (1826).—Chateaubriand had composed while in London an immense work of over 2,000 pages, *Les Natchez*, a sort of "epic of primitive man," from which he detached *Atala*, and then *René*. The manuscript of *Les Natchez*, which was lost for a few years, was found and sent back to Chateaubriand, who could not resist the temptation to publish it.—René, who had left France (see *René*), has come to ask hospitality of the Natchez, a savage tribe of Louisiana. He is taken under the protection of Chactas, who recounts to him the story of his youth (see *Atala*), his stay in France, etc. René marries Céluta, but his fatal melancholy never leaves him. He ends by leaving Céluta, writing her a letter in which the torments which he suffers are analysed with as much penetration as eloquence. For this letter alone, and for a few admirable descriptions, Chateaubriand ought to be forgiven all that is old-fashioned in the *Natchez*, even the fights between the savage tribes related in a pseudo-epic style.



MADAME RÉCAMIER

From the portrait drawn by Pulcherie de Valence  
and engraved by Henry

**Voyage en Amérique** (1834).—Here again we have a portfolio of sketches, from which the author had already drawn the pictures in *Atala*, *René* and *Les Natchez*. This diary Chateaubriand certainly retouched later; but it preserves all the same (and we must credit this to the artistic tact of the author) the freshness and poetry of first impressions. Let us lay aside all the part which relates to the manners and sentiments of the savages, and even the description of animals (for here Chateaubriand borrowed too much from Charlevoix and Bartram), and let us consider only the soul of the author vibrating at one with American nature—the ocean, the forests, the clouds and the winds: it is the preparation of the romantic palette or lyre (1).

**Les Aventures du dernier Abencérage** (1826).—Probably composed before *Les Martyrs*, this short work appeared only, like *Les Natchez*, in the Complete Works published in 1826.—The last descendant of the Moorish tribe of the Abencérages, Aben-

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 394; 2nd cycle, p. 893.



Hamet, whose ancestors had been massacred at Grenada by Boabdil, returns from Africa to revisit the country of his fathers. At Grenada he meets the daughter of the Duke de Santa-Fé, Doña Blanca. She returns Aben-Hamet's love, and no longer wishes to marry the Count de Lautrec, and lets her brother, Don Carlos, fight the Abencérage, to whom she vows eternal fidelity. But Blanca is a descendant of the Bivars, who persecuted and banished the ancestors of Aben-Hamet. The latter learns of this, leaves Blanca whom he adores, and returns to his place of exile.—Though the style of this work now seems somewhat old-fashioned, its warm and vibrant oriental colour, its fiery and chivalric grace and its energetic concision will always preserve it from oblivion.

**Les Études Historiques** (1831).—In the Preface, Chateaubriand says: "I began my literary career with a work in which I considered Christianity from the moral and poetical point of view; I conclude it with a work in which I consider the same religion in its philosophical and historical relations..." These *Etudes* are composed of six discourses, the first four describing the transformations of the Roman Empire, from Julius Cæsar to Augustulus; the last two are devoted to the manners of the Christians, the pagans and the barbarians—and these are the most remarkable; here we find once more the author of book VI of the *Martyrs*.

**Essai sur la Littérature anglaise** (1836).—This piece of literary criticism was composed in order to accompany the translation of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Chateaubriand warns us in his Preface that he has allowed himself many digressions; and he added this sub-title... "*et considérations sur le génie des temps, des hommes et des révolutions*." There is some hastiness in Chateaubriand's literary criticism, but also much intelligence, and feeling for the true and the beautiful; and the passage concerning Milton is as valuable to-day as ever.

**Vie de Rancé** (1844).—Chateaubriand dedicated this work to Abbé Seguin, a Sulpician, by whose advice he had undertaken it.—Abbé de Rancé, contemporary of Bossuet, reformer of La Trappe, one half of whose life was passed in the most brilliant society and the other half in solitude, offered, in this contrast, an admirable subject. Chateaubriand wrote an interesting account of him, but monotonous and cold in style.

**Les Mémoires d'outre-tombe** (written from 1811 to 1846, and published in February, 1848, in the newspaper *La Presse*). This vast work suffices, in itself alone, for a knowledge of Chateaubriand. Almost all his other works, from *Atala* to the *Dernier des Abencérages*, were made from his impressions and his visions; in the *Mémoires*, so to speak, he shows us their sources. He describes his childhood, his voyages, his political life; he paints landscapes and draws portraits; and if it may be said that he was too anxious to pose before posterity, yet the psychological, historical and picturesque interest of this autobiography, of a genre unique in French literature, cannot be denied.

Even if we search other literatures, where shall we find any work which contains, at the same time, so much poetry and realism, so much plastic beauty, and so many ideas (1)?—Its publication was coldly received. The public saw in it above all else a monument of pride, like another and even more grandiose mausoleum than that of Grand-Bé, which Chateaubriand was raising to his own memory. Too many people were wounded in their pride, especially in the political world, to enable men to judge impartially of these pages in which the author spared nobody but himself. Nowadays, the most authoritative critics place the *Mémoires* in the front rank of his works—par-

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 402; 2nd cycle, pp. 901, 910.



ticularly after they could compare this work with the *Confidences* of Lamartine, the *Victor Hugo raconté par un témoin de sa vie*, and the *Journal* of the Goncourt brothers!

**The *Écrits politiques*.**—Let us limit the list to : *De Buonaparte et des Bourbons* (1814);—*La Monarchie selon la Charte* (1816);—*Le Congrès de Vérone* (1823);—*La Guerre d'Espagne*, which is a sequel to the latter (1824). The principal articles and discourses may be found in volume VIII of the Garnier edition.

Chateaubriand himself published a complete edition of his works from 1836-39 (Paris, Pourrat), but this edition does not include the *Vie de Rancé* or the *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*.

**Chateaubriand's Influence.**—Théophile Gautier says of Chateaubriand: "He restored the Gothic cathedral, revealed again the hidden grandeur of nature, and invented modern melancholy." If we add that Chateaubriand rejuvenated criticism, we have thus summed up his entire influence.

1° He restored the Gothic cathedral. — This should be understood first of all in its figurative sense. By his *Génie du Christianisme*, if he did not indeed add anything worth while to theology, by new and contemporary arguments he broke the anti-religious tradition of the eighteenth century. He rehabilitated, socially and æsthetically, Christianity; and, independent of all positive religion, he explained and justified religious sentiment.—In the right sense, he once more cultivated curiosity and interest in the Middle Ages, which had been so disdained, for different reasons, in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He attempted to explain everything, institutions, manners, monuments. To pseudo-Greek architecture he opposed national Gothic art, whose symbolical relations with the religion and landscapes of France he demonstrated. Thanks to him, such men as Augustin Thierry, Victor Hugo, Michelet, Vitet, Mérimée, historians, poets, critics, administrators, were struck with admiration, at once deliberate and enthusiastic, for the mediæval masterpieces, so long misunderstood.

2° He revealed again the hidden grandeur of nature.—It is not true to say that nature had been hidden from a public which had been able to read Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre; but it is more just to say that Chateaubriand extended and transformed the feeling for nature. He extended it, because he did not only, like Rousseau, describe Switzerland, Savoy, the forest of Montmorency or Mont-Valérien; but after the Breton solitude of Combourg he painted the immensity of the ocean, under every aspect of day and night, and the American forest, and the banks of the Mississippi; and then the Roman Campagna, Naples, Messina, Attica, Palestine and Spain.—And each of his pictures, though evidently the work of the same painter, is always characteristic, and even now surprises the reader, after a whole century of descriptive literature, by the admixture of precision of line and brilliance of colouring. In these

so various landscapes, drawn from nature, he has understood how to place men with their appropriate costume, gesture and manners, who stand out from the landscape and harmonise with it. Local colour, impossible to reconstitute archaeologically, is preeminently a relation. Neither Atala, Chactas, Eudore, nor Cymodocée could change their background without changing their psychology, their adventures and their language.—Chateaubriand not only extended the feeling for nature, but transformed it. Bernardin, indeed, had painted seas, storms and tropical nature, and with the richest palette. But his descriptions remained objective. Bernardin's eye was a mirror which reflected with as much accuracy as clarity all the scale of nuances; but his soul did not seem to mingle with the landscape. Though Chateaubriand received much from nature, he gave back more. Repressed and pained, misunderstood by a society entirely given over to its pleasures or its discussions, his soul only found refuge in nature. He questioned her, and associated her with his grief, found her maternal or indifferent, adored her or cursed her,—his was the romanticist conception of nature, which was to inform all the great lyric poetry from 1820 to 1848.

3° He invented modern melancholy. — Certainly, melancholy, taken in its limited sense of moral lassitude and disgust for life, existed before Chateaubriand. Saint-Preux, in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1760), and especially *Werther* (1774, translated into French after 1778) are melancholy men. But they seem like exceptions, rebellious and eccentric (1). In *René*, on the contrary, a whole generation can recognise itself; *René* incarnated the *mal du siècle*. Ruins, violent deaths, moral and scientific deceptions, humanitarian dreams denied by the brutality of facts, misery, exile,—and for these evils and griefs no consolation, no positive faith, but a vague deism, exasperated vanity, excited and unsatisfied passions: such were the historical and social elements from which resulted about 1800, between the shocks of the Revolution and the Imperial wars, this new kind of melancholy. With the divination and unconsciousness which are the marks of genius, Chateaubriand crystallised this state of the soul in *René*. But what was most interesting in this melancholy made of dreams and disappointments, was that it became the basis of lyricism, in the active as well as the passive sense.

The poet, alternately seeking and despairing, acquires an exasperated and exquisite sensibility; he associates all nature with his own impressions; he languishes with autumn, and is born again with the springtime; he loses himself in the serenity of night, and would fly on the wings of the storm. On his part, the reader, whose faculty of perceiving and vibrating is refined under the influence of this melancholy, experiences an imperative need for a voice which

(1) We should mention here the *Obermann* of Sénancour, which appeared in 1828. It is a sort of moral autobiography, as remarkable as a social and psychological document as Chateaubriand's *René*. but its art is poor and its reading tiresome. Certain extracts will always be quoted, as they happily complete the analyses of *melancholy* at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

formulates and modulates what he himself feels but half-way. He is in spiritual touch with the poet.—We find in Chateaubriand all the themes of great romanticist poetry; and when Lamartine published his *Méditations* in 1820, the public, formed by reading the *Génie*, *René*, the *Martyrs*, seemed to say to him: "We expected you."

4° Finally, Chateaubriand renewed criticism.—First, he renewed literary



MADAME RÉCAMIER IN HER DRAWING-ROOM AT L'Abbaye-aux-Bois  
From the picture by Deyrienne (1826) lithographed by Aubry-le-Comte (1827).

criticism, by substituting for the criticism of faults, that of beauties, and in teaching us, in order to judge a work, to replace it in its own environment, amidst the civilisation and manners of which it is the expression. However, so far as that goes, Mme de Staël would have sufficed. Chateaubriand's originality lay in the definite adjustment of the misunderstanding which was called the quarrel of ancients and moderns. In the parts of the *Génie* entitled: *Poétique du Christianisme* and *Beaux-arts et littérature*, Chateaubriand established, no longer ranks, but differences. His plea in favour of the Christian marvel-

lous was based much less upon the superiority of a doctrine than upon the necessity to respond in writing to the beliefs of his time. Legitimate in Homer, mythology was absurd for Christians. Likewise, in his study of married people, of the wife, the mother, the warrior among the ancients and the moderns, he noted the psychological acquisitions due to Christianity; and he revealed to the classicists themselves—which they had not seemed to feel—that their originality was most brilliant where they had modified and enriched, in the name of this principle of relation to time and place, the types furnished by their models.

History is not less indebted to him. Not only, as we have already said, has Chateaubriand restored to us an appreciation of the Middle Ages, and revealed to us their true local colour; not only has he produced, himself, in several passages from *Les Martyrs*, the *Itinéraire*, the *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, the *Études historiques*, model narratives, exact and full of colour, but his theories on the relativity of works of art, applied to antique and modern civilisation, have been extremely fecund (1).

**Chateaubriand's Style.**—Chateaubriand descends both from the great classic writers, like Pascal, Bossuet and Voltaire, and the precursors of romanticism such as J.-J. Rousseau and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. But he is in no sense an imitator. In him we must see the painter with a gift for evoking in our imaginations the most diverse landscapes,—the poet, who notes with delicacy and profundity the motions and impulses of the heart;—and the orator who develops ideas by means of comparisons and metaphors expressed in ample prose. But there is also—and too often forgotten—a lively and witty Chateaubriand, with an energetic and concise style, who excels in sketching portraits. Although Chateaubriand's manner smacks somewhat of effort, and although he often abuses his splendid imagination and his oratorical facility, it may be said that there is no greater or more varied style than his in all the prose of the nineteenth century. He has served as model for everybody: poets who had only to put into rhythm and rhyme a prose which was already so musical, historians who have borrowed his picturesque precision, critics, orators, novelists... He was their leader and master.

## II. — MADAME DE STAEL (1766-1817).

**Biography.**—Germaine Necker was born in Paris in 1766. Her father, who was to play such an important rôle during the Revolution, was then a rich banker who

(1) See the chapter on *Historiens*, p. 822. and the Preface of the *Récits mérovingiens* of AUG. THIERRY, written in 1840.



had come from Geneva to Paris. His mother belonged to an old French family which had taken refuge in Switzerland after the revocation of the edict of Nantes.—Germaine Necker's childhood was passed among intelligent, sensible people, who were also worldly and ambitious. The precocious intelligence and naturally excitable imagination of the young girl developed in the salon of Mme Necker, which was frequented by Raynal, Morellet, Suard, Thomas, Grimm, Buffon, Marmontel, La Harpe. Germaine went to the Comédie-Française to applaud Mlle Clairon, read everything that came to hand, and at fifteen made an analysis of *L'Esprit des lois*, published at twenty-two a work on Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and talked on every subject with indefatigable animation. Her parents married her to the Baron de Staël-Holstein, Swedish ambassador to Paris. She was cosmopolitan even in her marriage, and a Frenchwoman only in talent.

Mme de Staël, after the vicissitudes of her father's political career, followed him in his retirement to Coppet, near Geneva, where she remained three years (1792-95). In 1796, she published *De l'Influence des passions sur le bonheur*. In 1797, she returned to Paris where, in her hôtel in the rue du Bac, she began to exercise a serious influence upon society. Before long, however, her salon fell under the suspicion of Buonaparte. Meanwhile she

published, in 1800, her book *De la Littérature*. In 1802, her husband died; and in the same year she published her first novel, *Delphine*. On October 15, 1803, she was ordered to establish herself forty leagues from Paris (1); and in December, accompanied by her children, she set out to visit Germany. She stopped at Frankfort, Weimar, and Berlin; met Goethe and Schiller, Fichte and G. de Schlegel. Her father's death recalled her to Coppet in April, 1804; and she composed his eulogy under the title, *Du Caractère de M. Necker et de sa vie privée*. In November, 1805, she left for Italy, returning in June, 1806. She published Co-



*Madame de Staël*

PORTRAIT-CARICATURE OF MADAME DE STAEL

This sketch shows the "masculine physiognomy" of Madame de Staël better than the other pictures, which have too much idealized her features.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 411.

*rinne*, her second novel, and made vain efforts to return to Paris. Compelled to stay on at Coppet, she set to work to attract to that place all who were opposed to Napoleon I., whether Frenchmen or foreigners. In 1807, she undertook a second journey to Germany, going again to Weimar, and visiting Munich and Vienna. After this she was able to write her book *De l'Allemagne*, which she had printed in Paris in 1810; but, just as the volume was about to appear, all the copies were seized by the police and destroyed. Mme de Staël, who had superintended, from Chaumont, the printing of her work, was now again sentenced to exile, and forbidden to live even at Coppet. In 1811, she married a young Swiss officer, Albert de Rocca. The following year, she travelled to Vienna and Saint-Petersbourg, returning by Sweden into England, where she published her book *De l'Allemagne*, and returned to France in 1814. After another journey to Italy and a sojourn at Coppet, she resumed in Paris a feverish social life, wrote her *Dix Années d'exil*, and her *Considérations sur la Révolution française*, and died on July 13, 1817. Her remains were carried to Coppet and buried there.

**Her Works.**—One word about her novels: *Delphine* (1802) has for its motto this thought of Mme Necker's: "A man should know how to brave public opinion, a woman to submit to it." The novel is written in letters, according to the eighteenth century formula, made famous especially by Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. In 1802, after Chateaubriand's *Atala*, it seemed already old-fashioned.—*Corinne* (1806) has retained its interest better. Here the thesis of feminism is frankly presented. Corinne is a "femme supérieure", who possesses all the gifts of nature and all the talents; therefore, she cannot make a place for herself in society. The thesis aside, the background of the novel and the digressions it contains assure it a certain length of life. The descriptions of Rome, of Tivoli, the analysis of the masterpieces of sculpture and painting, the chapters on Naples, and Pompei, the criticisms of Italian comedy and tragedy, will always be quoted as remarkable models of a criticism very feminine in its capacity for assimilation and its enthusiasm (1).

**De la Littérature** (1800).—"My object," says Mme de Staël, "was to discover what is the influence of religion, manners and laws upon literature, and what influence literature exerts upon religion, manners and laws... It seems to me that the moral and political causes which modify the spirit of literature have not been sufficiently analysed." It was, then, a study of the relations between literature and society, and Mme de Staël wished to apply Montesquieu's method to letters. But she demonstrates a thesis, that of progress, and this groups her with the encyclopædists and the ideologues. What is the factor in this progress? Liberty. It is the development—the brightening or the momentary darkening—of the spirit of liberty which she seeks through all ancient and modern literatures.—After a preliminary discourse in which she examines the relations between literature and virtue, glory, liberty, happiness, she devotes a "first part" to the ancients and moderns, from the time of the Greek epic to the end of the eighteenth century. The chapters on Greece and Rome are weak; and the same may be said of those dealing with Spanish and Italian literature. But Mme de Staël comes into her own when she deals with Northern liter-

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 414.

atures (chapters xi and xvii); and her chapter xii is perhaps, after so many works of contemporary criticism, even after Schlegel and Taine, the most vivid and most suggestive evocation of Shakespeare.—The French literature of the seventeenth century could not be justly estimated in such a thesis; in fact Mme de Staël holds the opinion which was to be taken up later by Taine, and calls it "a worldly literature." She sees nothing in it but the drama. The eighteenth century, on the contrary, was made for the thesis, if the thesis was not made for the century.—The second part is entitled: *De l'état actuel des lumières en France et de leur progrès futur*. Despite several piquant observations and a great many eloquent formulas, it may be said that Mme de Staël had in no way foreseen or traced the coming development of romanticism, except in the novel (1). In short, the chief merit of this work does not lie in its hasty generalisations, nor its slightly superficial tables and its prophetic formulas soon to be denied by facts, but in its vivid and mobile sympathy with fine works and noble sentiments, its ready enthusiasm, for the first time substituted for dogmatism, and its intelligent appreciation of foreign literatures:—from all this was to be formed the criticism of Villemain and of Sainte-Beuve.



CORINNE AU CAP MISÈNE

From the picture by François Gérard (1770 1837),  
lithographed by Aubry le Comte.

In this picture which decorated the drawing-room of Madame Récamier, who was Madame de Staël's faithful friend, the painter has given Corinne the idealized features of Madame de Staël.

**De l'Allemagne** (1810).—There are two elements to be considered in this book: the first, felt deeply by her contemporaries, is a protest in favour of right against might, and of the principle of nationalities against the spirit of conquest. Mme de Staël, in the midst of the affrighted silence of Europe, raised a generous and eloquent voice, as the imperial police well knew. On the other hand, it is a work of criticism, excellent in its time, and which, much more than *Littérature*, has retained its value. It is divided into four parts: I. *De l'Allemagne et des mœurs des Allemands*.—II. *De la littérature et des arts*.—III. *La philosophie et la morale*.—IV. *La religion et l'enthousiasme*. The second part is the most interesting. In Germany, Mme de Staël understood romanticism and poetry; her chapters on Goethe, Schiller, and Klopstock are still vital.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 409; 2nd cycle, p. 913.

as well as those she devotes to criticism, to Lessing, to Schlegel. In philosophy she is less competent; nevertheless, she was the first to initiate the French into the work of Kant and Fichte.—From the political and social point of view, we now feel that she idealised Germany, and that Napoleon was justified in 1810 when he exercised a severe censorship upon this imprudent apology for the enemies of France (1).

**Madame de Staël's Influence.**—Her influence was deep and lasting. In history, she transformed the encyclopædist theory of progress, introducing therein the moral element and enthusiasm. "That which we admire in great men," she says, "is only virtue wearing the form of glory." Michelet was to be inspired even more with this generous enthusiasm.—In criticism, her influence was still more powerful; it foreruns Chateaubriand's, and completes it. She shows us, like him, how to discover the social principles of literature. She helped to destroy classic dogmatism, recommending the study of any given work as considered in its milieu and in relation to the multiple conditions which have provoked and modified it; with her the sense of relativeness and the historical sense both enter into criticism. She corrects what might tend to too much scepticism in this theory by a very vivid sense of, and a sort of instinct for, beauty and truth; and her spirit inform all works of criticism from Villemain to Taine. Finally, Mme de Staël was one of the most ardent propagandists of literary cosmopolitanism. The method she followed for making us know and love the Germany of Goethe and Schiller, we also find in the prefaces of the romanticists, in J.-J. Ampère, Fauriel, Philariète Chasles, in Taine's *Littérature anglaise*, and in the *Roman russe* of M. de Vogüé.

**Madame de Staël as Writer.**—Mme de Staël's style is that of an animated conversation, which often descends to diffuseness and chat, but abounds in vivid and happy turns of expression, and is always sustained by enthusiasm. We read her with interest and pleasure, but we do not receive the impression which beautiful language, sure of itself, invariably leaves—it is rather the style of a publicist.

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ORNAMENT TAKEN FROM THE *Génie du Christianisme*.



DECORATIVE FRIEZE

Taken from a romanticist edition of the Works of Lamartine

## CHAPTER IV.

# LYRIC POETRY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

## SUMMARY

1° Lyricism, in the nineteenth century, was successively romanticist, Parnassian and symbolistic.

2° **LAMARTINE** (1798-1869) was not a professional poet. Diplomat, deputy, minister, he wrote verses from inspiration.—In 1820, the *Premières Méditations* satisfied the taste and fulfilled the need of the public; Lamartine expressed in these the agony and hope of a soul which finds peace in Nature and in God.—In his subsequent collections, and in his epic *Jocelyn*, he abuses his facility, yet all these works contain sparks of genius.—At the end of his life he wrote hastily, to make money. He died almost in oblivion, but posterity has restored him to the first rank.

3° The romanticists assembled in **groups** around the *Muse française* (1823-24), in the house of Charles Nodier at the Arsenal (1824-34), and in the house of Victor Hugo (1828-30).

4° **VICTOR HUGO** (1802-1885) was before everything else a poet, and never left off writing verse. Circumstances forced him into politics, and he was exiled from 1851-1870; he is the most popular of French writers, and at his death he was given a national funeral.—He rose by degrees from his *Odes et Ballades* to the *Orientales*, *Feuilles d'Automne*, etc., and his originality became more and more evident, attaining its height in *Les Châtiments*, and the *Légende des siècles*, in which he renewed the epic. As a poet, he is a seer, a painter and a virtuoso.

5° **A. DE VIGNY** (1797-1863) is above all a **thinker**. In his *Destinées*, he formulates the stoic and pessimist doctrine; but he believed in **pity** and **progress**.

6° **A. DE MUSSET** (1810-1857) is the most spontaneous and sincere of the romanticists. He excels in the expression of love.

7° **THE PARNASSIANS** reacted against **personal** lyricism. Their leaders were **TH. GAUTIER**, **LECONTE DE LISLE**, **J.-M. DE HÉRÉDIA**, all remarkable for their feeling for the plastic and for tropical scenes.—Other poets, after adopting the same formula for a time, returned to the ego, such as **SULLY PRUDHOMME** and **FRANÇOIS COPPÉE**.

8° **THE SYMBOLISTS** reacted, in their turn, against the too material poetry of the Parnassians. With **VERLAINE** and **MALLARMÉ**, they achieved an idealistic subtlety, sometimes obscure.



DECORATED LETTER  
of the XIX century.

ROMANTICISM, as we have endeavoured to define it above, could not adapt itself, in poetry, to any of the classical genres, even transformed. Being primarily individual, because all its originality lay in the free expression of the personal sentiments of the author, only one poetic genre could suit it, namely, the lyric form. When we consider Lamartine, Vigny and Musset, we have to banish from the definition of lyricism nearly all that Malherbe, Boileau and J.-B. Rousseau had introduced into it, and of Greek and Latin lyric forms we should preserve only the element of individuality. The true ancestors of Lamartine, Vigny and de Musset were Ronsard and du Bellay in France, Petrarch in Italy, Goethe in Germany, the Lake School and Byron in England; and in Latin antiquity Horace rather than Propertius or Tibullus; and finally, the Psalms.—Victor Hugo's lyricism is more comprehensive; this poet is lyrical in the manner of Lamartine and de Musset, but also included politics and satire, and sang, like the *trouveres* and Malherbe himself, of the great political events of his time. The others, "ignorant, knew nothing but their own souls;" but Victor Hugo expressed the impressions of a whole nation at different periods.—However, even if we include all of Hugo's work, we may still adopt the following formula to express romanticist lyricism: "It is the impassioned and metaphoric expression of individual sentiments on common themes." What, indeed, do Lamartine, Vigny, Hugo, Musset sing of if not joy and grief, fear or hope, doubt or faith, nature, love, death, liberty, patriotism—in short, all the sentiments by which humanity lives and will always live? Facts are for them mere occasions for freshening commonplace emotions.

After 1848, there was a reaction against excessive subjective lyricism. Théophile Gautier began the movement, which was continued by the Parnassians of whom Leconte de Lisle became chief. However, in spite of their pretensions to objectivity, the Parnassians remained romanticists, singing especially their own impressions and sentiments, like Sully Prudhomme and François Coppée. Only one can claim, like Leconte de Lisle, a sort of impassibility, and that is J.-M. de Hérédia.

A new reaction set in towards 1880, that of the Symbolists, who accused the Parnassians of setting too high a price on form alone, and returned to the vaguest themes of romanticism, adding only a greater liberty of versification. This change was conditioned if not provoked by the evolution of music, which, at that epoch, abandoned more and more pure melody, and substituted a more complicated tonality expressive of all the nuances of feeling.

We shall study in turn the Romanticists, the Parnassians and the Symbolists.

## I. — THE ROMANTICISTS.

### LAMARTINE (1790-1869).

**Biography.**—Alphonse de Lamartine was born at Mâcon on October 21, 1790. His father, a nobleman of ancient descent, had been an officer, and was a fine type of uprightness and probity; his mother was one of the most distinguished women of her time, in intelligence and character: she is known not only in the *Confidences*, but also, and especially, through her *Journal*; while the part she had in forming her son's genius cannot be exaggerated. After the Revolution the family settled and lived for several years on the estate of Milly, near Mâcon.—Alphonse de Lamartine was the oldest of six children, and the only son. At the age of ten, he was sent to a boarding-school at Lyons, and then at Belley, where he stayed four years and studied diligently (1). From 1807-1811 he lived with his family at Milly and Mâcon. This time was fruitful for him; he read, meditated and dreamed, and wrote much verse,—of which his Correspondence is full,—that resembled more or less all the verse of the time. A journey to Italy (1811-1812) added more highly coloured impressions to these of his youth.

In 1814, at the first Restoration, Lamartine was body-guard to Louis XVIII; but after the Hundred Days he did not resume this service. He returned to the fruitful idleness of the country gentleman, the traveller and man of the world. Then, influenced by a profound disappointment in love, he wrote the

(1) Read his *Adieux au Collège de Belley* (*Premières Méditations*, Hachette edition, p. 77).



*Méditations*, which were published in 1820. They had an immense success. Louis XVIII appointed the poet secretary to the Embassy in Florence in 1821. In 1823, appeared the *Nouvelles Méditations* and *La Mort de Socrate*; then *Le Dernier Chant du pèlerinage d'Harold* (1825) and *Les Harmonies* (1830). In the same year Lamartine was received into the French Academy.

After the fall of Charles X, Lamartine resigned. He made a journey to the Orient in 1832, and published an account of it in 1835. In 1833, he was appointed deputy for Bergues (Nord), and began his political life. Meanwhile he continued to publish verse: *Jocelyn* (1836), *La Chute d'un Ange* (1838), *Les Recueils* (1839). In 1847, he published a work in prose, the *Histoire des Girondins*. The revolution of 1848, which he helped to prepare and at first tried to direct, made him Minister of Foreign Affairs and chief of the provisional government. But the election of Louis-Napoléon to the Presidency of the Republic, caused his return to private life and literature. In



PORTRAIT OF LAMARTINE AT THE EPOCH OF THE *Méditations*  
From a lithograph by Victor Auger.

the midst of the political troubles of 1849, he published *Les Confidences*, *Graziella* and *Raphael*. Then, to release himself from the financial embarrassments caused both by his disinterestedness and his prodigality, he condemned himself, according to his own expression, to "literary hard labour." He wrote, at a stretch, *Le Cours familier de Littérature*, *L'Histoire de la Restauration*, etc. He appealed to public generosity by means of subscriptions to his complete works; but France had forgotten the *Méditations*. It was necessary for the imperial government to come to his aid, and make him accept, as a national reward,

a capital of 500,000 francs.—Lamartine died on February 28, 1869, and was buried simply and quietly at Saint-Point.

**Works.**—The *Premières Méditations poétiques*, which came out in 1820, contain the most celebrated and most characteristic of Lamartine's pieces : *L'Isolément*, *Le Soir*, *Le Vallon*, *Le Lac*, *Le Golfe de Baïa*, and *L'Automne* (1).—In the *Nouvelles Méditations* (1823) : *Le Passé*, *Le Poète mourant*, *Bonaparte*, *Les Étoiles*, *Les Préludes*, *Le Crucifix* (2).—*La Mort de Socrate* (1823) is a sort of paraphrase of a part of *Phædo*, Plato's dialogue in which he relates Socrates' last interview with his disciples and his death. Lamartine has not reproduced, in this hasty sketch, the simple and divine beauty of the Greek philosopher.—*Le Dernier Chant du Pèlerinage d'Harold* (1825) is a sequel to Byron's *Childe-Harold's Pilgrimage*. Lamartine, in this poem, describes the poet's last stay in Italy and his death at Missolonghi for Greek independence. An eloquent passage in which Lamartine puts in Byron's mouth an anathema against Italy, and declares he will seek elsewhere "men, and not mere human dust," led to a duel between Lamartine and Colonel Pepe. A reading of this poem is rather tiresome now. Its marvellous is factitious; and Lamartine makes too free use of exclamations, invocations, in short, of all the rhetoric which takes us back to Delille and Voltaire.—*Les Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* (1830) includes a few of Lamartine's finest poems : *Invocation*, *Hymne de la nuit*, *Hymne du matin*, *Pensée des morts*, *Jéhovah*, *Le Chêne*, *L'Humanité*, *Milly ou la Terre natale*, *Le Tombeau d'une mère*, *La Voix humaine*, *Au rossignol*, *Le Premier regret*, *Novissima Verba* (3).—To his lyric work we must add the *Recueils*, in which we may mention : *La Cloche du village*.—Among his miscellaneous poems : *Réponse aux adieux de Sir Walter Scott*, *La Marseillaise de la paix*, *A Némésis* (a reply to Barthélemy, who had insulted him in a satiric journal called *Némésis*), and *La Vigne et la Maison*.

*Jocelyn*, *épisode, journal trouvé chez un curé de campagne* (1836). Such is the complete title of this poem, a fragment of an immense epic which Lamartine had dreamed of devoting to "humanity," and of which he was to publish another fragment two years later, *La Chute d'un ange*. The general idea of this epic is as follows: An angel, in love with a woman, wishes to become a man in order to approach her whom he loves. But God, while granting his wish, condemns the angel to pursue his love in vain, to be always separated from her, until, by constant suffering he has expiated his sin. Judging by the preface which Lamartine prefixed to the first edition, this long poem would seem to contain the program of Victor Hugo's *La Légende des siècles*. But while Hugo, a more objective genius, knew how to write with precision and variety, with the aid of legend and history, Lamartine would draw everything from himself: his poem therefore consists of a series of prehistoric visions in *La Chute d'un ange*, and a love romance in *Jocelyn*. As to *Jocelyn*, the result was lofty elevation of sentiment, freshness and power in the descriptions of nature, eloquence and a flood of personal poetry in the speeches, but also the improbability of a too romantic plot, conventional characters, and, on the whole, an inevitable monotony (4).—Lamartine imagines that he finds in the house of *Jocelyn*, a country priest who was his friend and who has just died, a diary from which he takes extracts. *Jocelyn* had decided in his youth to be a priest in order to assure

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 926.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 930.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 423; 2nd cycle, p. 932.

(4) Musset's judgment on *Jocelyn* is well-known. The baroness, in *Il ne faut jurer de rien*, says: "Abbé, have you read *Jocelyn*?—Yes, Madame", the Abbé replies, "it possesses genius, talent and facility."—These represent the three successive impressions the reader receives in reading *Jocelyn*.

the happiness of his sister. The Revolution drives him from the seminary of Grenoble, and he takes refuge in the grotto of the Aigles in the Alps in Dauphiny. One day he sees approaching a man who has been banished, accompanied by a child; soldiers pursue them; the man dies while confiding the child, Laurence, to Jocelyn. Laurence is a young girl, and Jocelyn falls in love with her; he has not yet taken orders, and he can marry her. But the Bishop of Grenoble, condemned to death, sends for Jocelyn and ordains him in his prison in order to receive from him the last sacraments. So he is separated for ever from Laurence. He becomes curé of a little village in the Alps, Val-neige. There he passes several years, always haunted by the memory of the love he has lost. One night, he is asked to come to a woman who, during a journey, has fallen seriously ill in a neighbouring hamlet. He goes at once, and recognizes Laurence, who dies with his blessing. He has her buried by the side of his father in the grotto of the Aigles.—This romance is full of admirable descriptions, and of lyrical outbursts of magnificent fancy. We should note especially, as one of the undoubted masterpieces of the nineteenth century, the episode of the *Neuvième Époque*, entitled *Les Laboureurs*, for never has the combination of epic and lyric poetry produced such a symphony (1).

**Prose Works.**—The chief prose works of Lamartine are :

**Le Voyage en Orient** (1835, 2 vols.). This is an account of the voyage he made in 1832, with his wife and daughter. Sailing from Marseilles on the brig "Alceste," July 10th he arrived on September 6th at Beyrouth, made a long stay in Syria and in Palestine, visited Jerusalem, the ruins of Balbek, Damascus, and returned by way of Constantinople. The style of this work is varied and exact, and it has not the harmonious monotony of the *Confidences*. It is interesting to compare the *Voyage en Orient* with Chateaubriand's *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*.

**L'Histoire des Girondins** (1847, 8 vols.). This work is part history, part novel. Lamartine has doubtless made use of documents, has searched numerous memoirs, and questioned witnesses. But he has not known how to choose or classify his proofs. Politics, and his imagination, take the place of criticism. The sketches of Robespierre, of Mme Roland, of Vergniaud; the account of the massacres of September, the trial of Louis XVI; the last banquet and the death of the Girondins are the finest pages of this unequal book, which, however, had an overwhelming success, and contributed its share to the Revolution of 1848.

**Les Confidences**, **Graziella**, **Raphaël** (1849), **Les Nouvelles Confidences** (1851), are somewhat romantic fragments of autobiography, which abound in charming and eloquent passages, but continuous reading of which fatigues and disappoints.

There should also be mentioned **L'Histoire de la Révolution de 1848** (1848), **L'Histoire de la Restauration** (1851-1853) and **Cours familier de littérature** (1856-1869).

Finally, Lamartine left a large number of **discours politiques** (1833-1849), the most famous of which was delivered at the Hotel de Ville on February 25th, 1848, to persuade the people to renounce the red flag and retain the tricoloured flag.

**Lamartine's lyricism.** — This lyricism has many sources : first, books, Virgil and Tibullus, Petrarch, Tasso, Ossian, Byron, Rousseau, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Chateaubriand; then, impressions of infancy and of an upbringing pious and delicate almost to femininity; finally, Lamartine's love for Elvire. The poet begins life in love with the ideal, believing in happiness and virtue; he seeks them in society, and, not finding them, he takes refuge in

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 431.

nature ; nature speaks to him of God, to whom little by little he ascends, until he is lost in Him.

We may then tabulate Lamartine's characteristic poems as follows: 1° A scene or a recollection with a background of nature (*L'Isolement* : Souvent sur la montagne, à l'ombre du vieux chêne... Je contemple... Ici gronde le fleuve...; — *L'Automne* : Salut, bois couronnés d'un reste de verdure...; — *Le Vallon* : Prêtez-moi seulement, vallon de mon enfance, un asile d'un jour... etc.); 2° Melancholy, discouragement, despair invade the soul of the poet (*L'Isolement* : Que me font ces vallons, ces palais, ces chaumières... Un seul être vous manque et tout est dépeuplé... *Le Vallon* : L'Amitié te trahit, la pitié t'abandonne...); 3° But, by degrees, hope in God, the calm of nature, act upon this melancholy (*L'Isolement* : Mais, peut-être, au-delà des bornes de sa sphère... Sur la terre d'exil pourquoi resté-je encore...? — *Le Vallon* : Mais la nature est là qui t'invite et qui t'aime...). And the poet desires death, that he may be absorbed into God (*Le Passé* : Saluons la splendeur divine Qui se lève dans le lointain... Ami, pour y voler plus vite, Prenons les ailes de la mort).

Now, this kind of lyricism, made of spontaneous naïve effusions, beginning with a complaint or a regret, and ending in resignation or hope, is just what suited readers in 1820, still excited by recent catastrophes, saturated with melancholy and vague religiousness from reading Chateaubriand, and waiting for a poet who would give expression to their own state of mind. Chateaubriand could not satisfy them; for sensitive and suffering souls need the cradling harmony and vague, voluptuous charm of music. The works of André Chénier, published in 1819 by H. de Latouche, could not fulfill this expectation. His Encyclopaedic philosophy, serene paganism and plastic precision made him an ancestor of the Parnassians rather than of the romanticists; and if we search among contemporary poets, what do we find? Casimir Delavigne and Béranger, who merely wrote in verse articles suitable for the liberal newspapers.

Never, then, was a poet's appearance more timely than that of Lamartine; and he was to survive his first success because his work satisfied a deep and eternal craving of the human soul, particularly felt at that time. — Two judgments on Lamartine enable us to realise this. The first is that of his mother, who wrote on November 7, 1828 : " Alphonse has sent me some verses which he has just composed, and which have deeply touched me ; he expresses exactly what I think ; he is my voice ; for I feel beautiful things, but I am mute when I would speak of them, even to God. When I meditate, my heart is like a great fire from which no flame arises ; but God, who hears me, has no need of my words, and I thank Him for having given them to my son." All the women who welcomed with emotion the poetry of Lamartine might have spoken so. And Cuvier, in his response to Lamartine's *Discours de réception* at the French Academy, said : " When, during one of those fits of sadness and discouragement which sometimes take possession of the strongest souls, a



solitary pedestrian hears in the distance a voice whose sweet and melodious songs express sentiments responsive to his own, he feels himself soothed by a benevolent sympathy; the fibres of his heart, which defeat had distended, begin to vibrate anew; and if that voice, which described his suffering so well, invites him, little by little, to hope and consolation, he is so to speak born again, and he feels an attachment for the unknown friend who has restored him to life; he desires to enfold him in his arms, and tell him effusively of all that he



VIEW OF *Lake Bourget*

The lake celebrated by the Poet in the *Premières Méditations*.

owes him. Such, Monsieur, has been the effect which your *Premières Méditations* have produced upon a large number of sensitive souls, tormented by the enigmas of the world." Never has any literary critic defined better than this scientist the nature of the lyricism of Lamartine and the reasons for its success.

Lamartine himself says in the Preface to the *Méditations* (written in 1849) "I am the first who called poetry down from Parnassus, and gave her whom we call the Muse, in place of the lyre with its seven conventional cords, the cords of the heart of man itself, moved and shaken by the innumerable vibrations of the soul and of nature". In his *Destinées de la Poésie* (1834), he draws a picture of imperial society: "Nothing could describe, for those who had not experienced it, the proud sterility of this epoch... Who would have said at

that time that, fifteen years later, poetry would flood the soul of all French youth? It remains for me to thank all those tender and pious souls of my time, all my brothers in poetry, who have welcomed with so much fraternal indulgence the feeble notes I have so far sung for them. »

Let us add that this lyricism, from the *Méditations* to the *Harmonies*, is never the poetry of the virtuoso. Lamartine was not a professional poet; and always, perhaps rather foolishly, defended himself from the accusation (1). He sang merely to relieve himself of the emotion or enthusiasm which oppressed him. This caused, doubtless, some carelessness in the phrasing or metre which spoil his verses in the eyes of grammarians and Parnassians. But it was responsible also, in some of his poems, for a sincerity of accent and a power of inspiration which cause us to forget the poet and think only of his poetry. After reading *Le Lac*, *Le Vallon*, *L'Immortalité*, *Le Chêne*, *Les Laboureurs* etc., we come back to reality as from a dream, with the dizzy feeling resulting from a flight towards the ideal.

## THE TWO LITERARY CIRCLES (CÉNACLES)

In 1823, a certain number of young poets founded a journal called *La Muse française*, which was intended to be a medium for the publication of original verse and critical articles. At the head of this group were **Alexandre Soumet**, **Alexandre Guiraud**, **Emile Deschamps**, **Alfred de Vigny**, **Victor Hugo**. Among the collaborators may be mentioned **Ancelot**, **Chénedollé**, **Jules Lefèvre**. But Lamartine would only subscribe, and would contribute nothing. *La Muse française* seems to us now very moderate and very eclectic. It lasted scarcely two years. This was the first Cénacle (2).

After the disappearance of *La Muse* in 1824, the young romanticists assembled again in the salon of **Charles Nodier** at the Arsenal, until about 1834. There were to be met **Victor Hugo**, **Lamartine**, **Sainte-Beuve**, **Dubois**, the founder of the *Globe*, **Alfred de Musset**, etc. Nodier's romanticism was intellectual and broad-minded, and his salon had a wholesome influence because it was not a coterie.

The second Cénacle was formed about 1828, around Victor Hugo. **Vigny**, **Emile** and **Antony Deschamps**, **Sainte-Beuve**, the sculptor **David d'Angers**, the painter **Boulanger**, etc., composed "adorers" of Hugo. There was more enthusiasm but less criticism than at Nodier's. The Cénacle of the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, furthermore, was dispersed after 1830.

(1) See particularly his letter to M. Bruys d'Onilly, at the beginning of *Les Recueils* (1838).

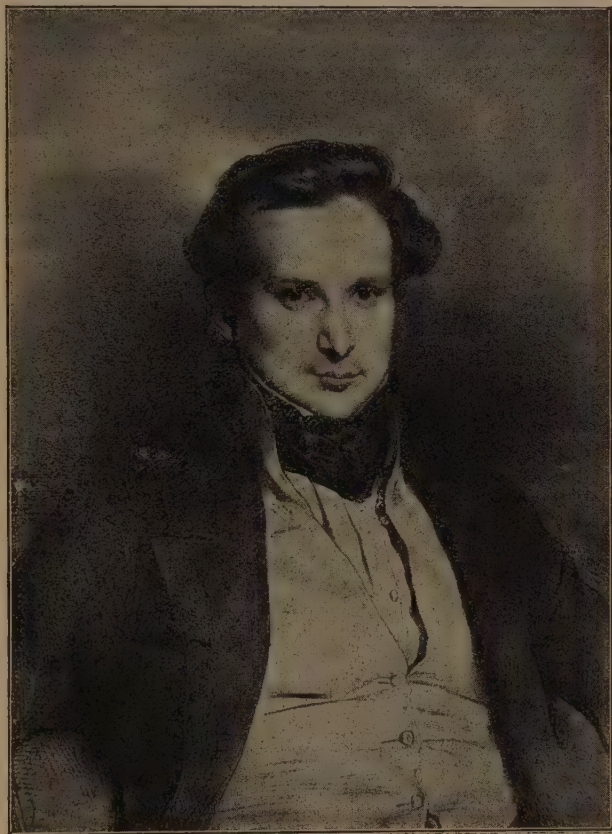
(2) See the *Presse littéraire sous la Restauration*, pp. 102 to 113.—Compare LÉON SÉCHÉ, *Le Cénacle de la Muse française*, 1908.

## VICTOR HUGO (1802-1885).

**Biography.** — Victor-Marie Hugo was born at Besançon in 1802, “of both Breton and Lorraine parentage.” His father, Commandant Léopold-Sigisbert Hugo, came from Nancy; his mother, Sophie Trébuchet, from Nantes.

Young Hugo accompanied his father to Italy, Corsica and the island of Elba; and then to Spain in 1811, where he remained for a year with his brother Eugène at the Madrid college of the Nobles. In 1812, the family returned to Paris and lived in the rue des Feuillantines, where the two brothers read whatever they pleased, and had for tutors “an old priest, the garden, and their mother.” In 1815 Victor was at the Cordier boarding-school, and attended classes at the lycée Louis-le-Grand; he got a prize in physics, and his father intended to send him to the Ecole

Polytechnique. But, in 1817, Victor sent some verses to the French Academy; in 1819, he was the laureate of the *Jeux Floraux*, and in the same year founded, with his brother Abel, and in collaboration with Soumet and Vigny, *Le Conservateur littéraire*, which only lived a year, and to which he alone contributed 272



PORTRAIT OF VICTOR HUGO, AT THIRTY  
From the lithograph by Achille Devéria (1800-1857).



articles. He married in 1822. In 1823, he became a collaborator of *La Muse française*, the organ of the first Cénacle, to which he contributed critical reviews.

Meanwhile, he collected the poems composed since 1818, and published in 1823 his *Odes*, to which in 1826 he added the *Ballades*. *Cromwell* with its famous Preface appeared in 1827, *Les Orientales* in 1829, *Hernani* in 1830, *Notre-Dame de Paris* in 1831. We shall take up his plays further on (1), noting here only the epic and lyrical collections. From 1831 to 1840 Hugo produced his four finest volumes of verse: *Les Feuilles d'automne*, *Les Chants du crépuscule*, *Les Voix intérieures*, *Les Rayons et les Ombres*. In 1841 he entered the French Academy.

He had been in his poems partisan of the Bourbons; but after the *Ordonnances* and the Revolution of July, he rallied to the monarchy of Louis-Philippe; the latter made him a peer in 1845. In 1848 Hugo was elected to the Constituent Assembly. It was at this period that he began *Les Misérables*, and wrote some of the pieces in *Les Contemplations*. After the coup d'Etat of December, 1851, he joined the opposition, was placed on a black list and exiled. He went first to Brussels, then to Jersey, and later to Guernsey. He published in 1853 *Les Châtiments*, a pamphlet against the Empire, *Les Contemplations* in 1856, the first series of *La Légende des Siècles* in 1859, *Les Misérables* in 1862, *William Shakespeare*, etc. After the fourth of September, 1870, he returned to Paris. He wrote *L'Année terrible*, *L'Art d'être grand-père*, and especially the last two series of *La Légende des siècles*, from 1877 to 1883. Though elected a deputy for Paris, and afterwards a senator for life, he never ceased writing, adding *Le Pape*, *La Pitié suprême*, *L'Ane*, *Les Quatre vents de l'esprit* to his already numerous works. He died on May 23, 1885, and France gave him a national funeral.

**His Lyrical Works.**—The *Odes et Ballades* (1822-1826) consist of pieces in Hugo's earliest manner (exception being made for the essays, translations, etc., published by *Le Conservateur* and *La Muse*). We should note among the *Odes*: *La Vendée*, *Les Vierges de Verdun*, *Quiberon*, *Louis XVII*, *La Naissance du duc de Bordeaux*, *Bonaparte*, *A mon père*, *La Guerre d'Espagne*, *Les Funérailles de Louis XVIII*, *Le Sacre de Charles X*, *Les Deux Iles*, etc., which were all inspired by current events. But among them we also find pieces of a more intimate lyricism; in the fifth book: *Au vallon de Chérizy*, *Le Voyage*, *La Promenade*, *Pluie d'été*, *Rêves*, the greater part of which were inspired by his bride. The *Ballades* already reveal him as a lover of the picturesque and of antithesis. If the author of the *Feuilles d'Automne*, and *Les Contemplations* is foretold in the *Odes*, the poet of *La Légende des siècles*, though timid, as yet is revealed in the *Ballades*. We should mention among the *Ballades*: *Le Sylphe*, *Le Géant*, *La Fiancée du timbalier*, *La Mêle*, *La Fée et la Péri*, and some virtuoso exhibitions: *La Chasse du Burggrave*, *Le Pas d'armes du roi Jean*.

**Les Orientales** (1829).—After 1824, a wave of orientalism had passed over France. All Europe was attentive to the struggle between Greece and Turkey. All the poets of that epoch were Philhellenists. Victor Hugo seized this subject and, without ever having seen the Orient, wrote poems about it; with the Orient he connected Spain, so strongly

(1) Cf. p. 769.

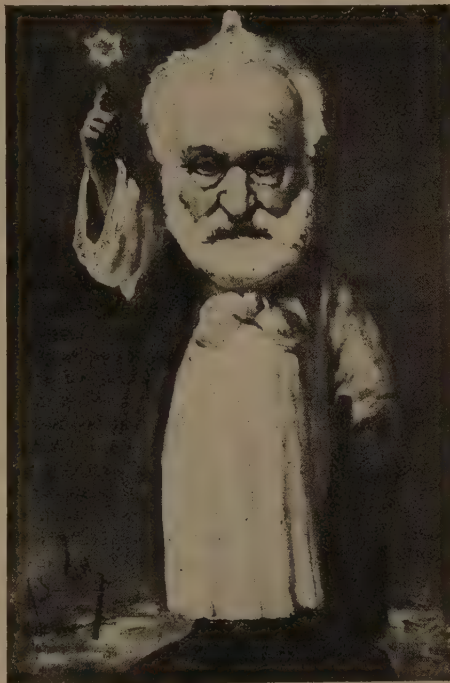


marked by Arab civilisation. *Les Têtes du sérail*, *Canaris*, *Navarin*, *Marche turque*, *La Bataille perdue*, *l'Enfant grec* (1), are all poems inspired by the Greco-Turkish war. Others are of a less local character: *Le Feu du ciel*, *Chanson de Pirates*, *La Captive*, *Clair de lune*, *Les Djinns*, *Romance mauresque*. Those dealing with Spain are: *Grenade*, and, perhaps, *Fantômes* (*Hélas! que j'en ai vu mourir de jeunes filles... Une surtout, un ange, une jeune Espagnole...*). Finally various poems such as *Mazéppa* and *Lui* about Napoleon).

**Les Feuilles d'Automne** (1831), **Les Chants du crépuscule** (1835), **Les Voix intérieures** (1837), **Les Rayons et les Ombres** (1840).—Of these four collections it would be necessary to cite so many poems that the list would become a table of contents. Current events (*Sur le bal de l'Hôtel de Ville*, *A l'homme qui a livré une femme*, etc.); poetry inspired by "Bonapartisme" (*Napoléon II*, *A la Colonne*, *A l'Arc de Triomphe* etc.); the home life of the poet and his melancholy (*A des oiseaux envolés*, *A Eugène, vicomte H.*, *Ce qui se passait aux Feuillantines vers 1813*, *Tristesse d'Olympio*); finally, nature, the forest or the sea—there was no lyrical theme which Hugo did not treat of in this period of ten years, during which he also wrote nearly all his plays, novels, etc. Here we find him in the fulness and perfection of his genius, before he attained the more grandiose but excessive lyricism of the *Contemplations* (2).

**Les Châtiments** first appeared in Brussels, then in Jersey in 1853, but the complete and definitive edition was not published until 1870. This is a lyrical satire in seven books, rather fatiguing as a whole, and whose value will more and more diminish owing to the abuse of personal allusions. But in this work the poet frequently reaches a height of power and eloquence unequalled in French literature. Among the finest pieces are: *A un martyr*, *A l'obéissance passive* (particularly four stanzas on the flags); *Sacer esto*, *Le Manteau impérial*, *l'Expiation* (which contains the description in verse of Waterloo, to be compared with the narrative of the same battle in *Les Misérables*), *Sonnez, sonnez toujours, clairons de la pensée*, *Ultima Verba* (...*Et s'il n'en reste qu'un, je serai celui-là*) (3).

**Les Contemplations** (1856) consists of two parts: *Autrefois, aujourd'hui*. "Au abyss



VICTOR HUGO AS A PROPHET

From a portrait-caricature by André Gill (1840-1885)

- (1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 946.
- (2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 434; 2nd cycle, p. 954.
- (3) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 442; 2nd cycle, p. 948.

separates them, the tomb," says the poet in his preface. The tomb is that of his daughter Léopoldine and his son-in-law, Ch. Vacquerie, at Villequier near Caudebec, both drowned in the Seine. Preference may be given, in this too long volume, to the poem entitled *Pauca mœx* (book IV), in which Hugo sings of the infancy and death of his daughter. Undoubtedly the best is one entitled *A Villequier*, in which depth and sincerity of inspiration are joined to the most perfect form. To this should be added the final poem : *A celle qui est restée en France*. We may also note : Book I. *Réponse à un acte d'accusation* (declaration of a revolutionary romanticism); Book III. *Le Revenant, Aux arbres* (*Arbres de la forêt, vous connaissez mon âme...*) (1). A number of the pieces in the first books are love poems in more or less bad taste; it seems that Hugo, in the idleness of his exile, published fragments and sketches which he had not dared to include in his four great lyrical collections, written during the period of his powerful maturity. As for book VI, entitled *Au bord de l'Infini*, it is composed of apocalyptic pieces, some of which, by their laborious obscurity, justify the cruel witticism of Vieillot : "This is Harlequin at Patmos." But others, such as *Les Mages, Ce que dit la Bouche d'Ombre*, are of a lyricism which, by its own power, baffles definition.

**La Légende des siècles.**—This collection, which now forms four volumes of the complete works, appeared, as we have said, in three instalments, in 1859, 1877 and 1883. The sub-title of the first series—*Petites Epopées*—was significant. The following shows how the poet conceived his plan : To express humanity in a kind of cyclic work, to paint it successively and simultaneously under all its aspects—history, fable, philosophy, religion science—all summed up in one whole and immense movement towards the light... These poems pass, one to another, the torch of human tradition, *quasi cursores*. It is this torch, whose flame is truth, which makes the unity of the book... The development of humanity from century to century, man rising from darkness to the ideal... the slow and supreme blossoming of liberty... that is what this poem will be in its entirety (2). " In the piece which serves as an Introduction, *La Vision d'où est sortie ce livre*, the poet thinks he sees the wall between the centuries... "*C'est l'épopée humaine, âpre, immense, écroulée*".—There are two things to be considered in *La Légende des siècles* : the *Petites Epopées*, taken in themselves, and the spirit of the poem, the theory of the endless progress of humanity, from *La Terre* and *Le Sacre de la femme* to *La Trompette du Jugement*. With the exception of some tediousness, and a few singular defects of taste, it may be said that all the historical or legendary narratives, the reconstitution of the Biblical past, the Middle Ages, the sixteenth century and modern times, are of an altogether original beauty. On the contrary, the disquisitional parts, whether philosophical, religious, political or utopian, are laborious and confused, and their obscurity frequently descends to balderdash.—The gems in this too large casket are : *La Conscience*, *Booz endormi*, *Le Romancero du Cid*, *Le Mariage de Roland*, *Aymerillot* (3), *Le Petit Roi de Galice*, *Eviradnus*, *Le Travail des captifs*, *L'Aigle du casque*, *La Rose de l'enfante*, *Le Retour de l'empereur*, *Après la bataille*, *le Cimetière d'Eylau*, *Les Pauvres gens*. Someday, perhaps, these "little epics" will be reduced to the foregoing; and disengaged from all the litter which smothers them, they will appear as the greatest effort of epic poetry in the nineteenth century.

From the other collections : *L'Année terrible*, *L'Art d'être grand-père*, *Les Chansons des rues et des bois*, etc., there will also be much to glean (4). But we may safe-

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 950.

(2) *Légende des siècles*, Preface to the first series (1859). See T. Gautier's judgment in his *Rapport sur le progrès de la Poésie française depuis 1830* (1867).

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 957.

(4) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 441; 2nd cycle. . 951.

ly assert that no new beauties will be discovered, for in the *Légende des siècles* Victor Hugo attained the extreme limit both of his excellence and his faults.

**Victor Hugo's lyricism.** — If we try to define Hugo's lyricism, in order to compare it with Lamartine's, we must first of all consider that Lamartine represents to perfection one of the modern lyrical forms, the spontaneous expression of intimate sentiment, especially of love, of melancholy and of hope; and with these he mingles a feeling for nature. Hugo is less spontaneous, less intimate, but more variegated. He defined himself as an "âme de cristal" and an "écho sonore." That is to say, he has reflected, reverberated, multiplied, orchestrated all the lyrical themes. First, he wrote successive poems upon all the impressions of his own century, from the *Naissance du duc de Bordeaux* to the *Année terrible*; and it is as if the poetical soul of the nineteenth century lived in his verses. Then he sang all the every day, normal sentiments: love, the family, children, the fatherland. To these themes he added philosophical doubt, religious evolution, the enigmas of death and the unknown, and faith in a future of liberty and progress. In short, he is like a lyrical encyclopedia of his time: so much for his subject-matter.

As regards form, Hugo did not, like Lamartine, produce his finest masterpieces spontaneously. His genius developed slowly, and as much from will as from inspiration. He perfected himself day by day in his craft. Like an artist who, little by little, becomes master of his brush and his palette, and who wishes to enrich and renew his manner, Hugo became year by year more of a seer and a painter. He was a seer by the very structure of his eye, which enabled him to distinguish, even in the most commonplace things, contours, depths and nuances. His imagination took possession of whatever his eye revealed, defined it, gave it the right perspective, and clothed it, in order to paint it, with splendid metaphors. By means of these metaphors, his imagination gives depth and mystery to the real, while it gives to the dream and the abstract the solidity and brilliance of the real. But it often, also, magnifies, and deforms things to the point of fatiguing and repelling the reader (1).

If we seek to characterise Hugo as a writer and versifier, the word we finally adopt is virtuoso, but not in its unfavourable sense. It would be impossible to possess more completely the resources and secrets of a language and a system of versification than Hugo did. His grammar is faultless, his vocabulary of astonishing richness; he had drawn infinitely upon the resources of the alexandrine, without ever deforming it; and has made use of all stanzas like a great

(1) A very useful exercise for studying Hugo's method is to reduce some of his pieces, such as *Napoléon II*, *Tristesse d'Olympio*, *Les Pauvres Gens*, etc., to the abstract or general idea or anecdote from which they are expanded, and then to study by what *images* and *processes* Hugo gave poetic life to these facts or sentiments. — See examples of this method in *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 942.

musician. He only lacks sobriety and restraint; and that is why posterity must necessarily select what is best in his work (1.)

### ALFRED DE VIGNY (1797-1863).

**Biography and Works.** — Count Alfred de Vigny, of whom we speak elsewhere as a dramatist and novelist (2), occupies a place apart in romanticist poetry. — Brought up by a charming mother, as distinguished in character as in mind, he at first felt drawn to a military career, in which his father and his ancestry had been illustrious. Joining the army at a period when the imperial regime had ended, he could not but be disappointed as an officer. In 1823, however, he went to the Spanish war; but his regiment, left for observation at the frontier, had no part in the fighting. From this expedition he only brought back his poem, the *Cor*, on the death of Roland. So he resigned in 1827, and retired to his "ivory tower."

From 1820 he had been associated with the romanticist movement, and had collaborated with Victor Hugo on the *Conservateur littéraire*. In 1822 he published his first collected poems; and in 1826 an enlarged edition under the title *Poèmes antiques et modernes*. This book comprises three parts: I. *Le Livre mystique*, composed of *Moïse* (3), *Eloa*, *le Déluge*. In *Moïse*, Vigny expresses the theory of the fatality which attends the poet (see in our chapter on the Drama, Chatterton). — *Eloa*, ou la sœur des anges, mystère, is a short poem in three cantos. An angel, born of one of Christ's tears, Eloa, loves Satan out of pity, and is drawn by him into the abyss. This is serene and lofty poetry, but cold. II. *Le Livre antique* is divided into *Antiquité biblique* and *Antiquité homérique*. To us, who are familiar with *La Légende des siècles* and the *Poèmes antiques* of Leconte de Lisle, these poems — *La Fille de Jephthé*, *La Dryade*, etc., seem very abstract. III. *Le Livre moderne*. Here we find the *Cor* (4) and *La Frégate la Sérieuse*. — After this publication, Vigny turned his attention to novels and plays. Of poems he only published *Le Mont des Oliviers* and *La Maison du Berger* (5) (in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*). It was only after his death that the book entitled *Les Destinées* appeared, which, with the two pieces just named, contains his finest poems; *La Colère de Samson*, *La Mort du Loup* (6), *La Bouteille à la mer*, *L'Esprit pur* (7).

**Vigny's Philosophy.** — Vigny is above all a thinker; his limited production

(1) On Victor Hugo as dramatist, compare p. 770; as novelist, p. 868.

(2) Compare pp. 776 and 867.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 965.

(4) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 449.

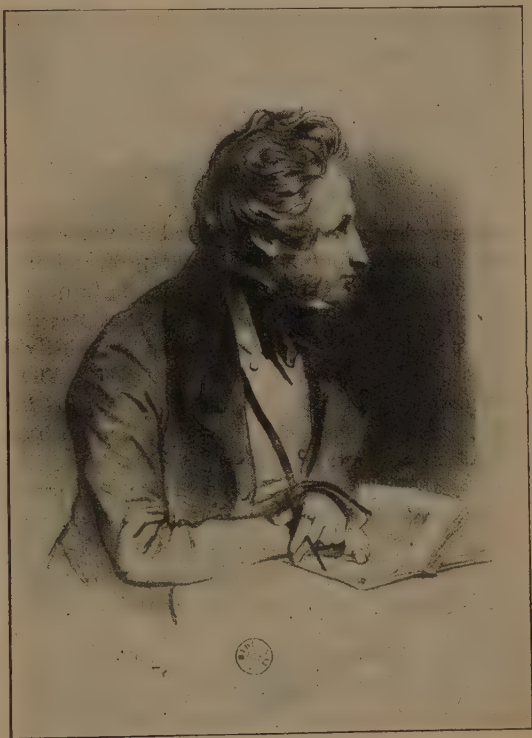
(5) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 968.

(6) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 969.

(7) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 453.



suggests long meditation ; his expression shows less facility than Lamartine, and less virtuosity than Hugo. His philosophy is a haughty pessimism, which does not lead the poet to despair or to faith, but to stoicism and pity. The starting-point of this pessimism is the painful and humiliating isolation in which a superior man feels himself placed ; humanity, of which however he is guide, neither understands nor loves him (*Moïse*). Now, it is not love which can console him : love is but betrayal (*La Colère de Samson*). Neither is it Nature, so welcoming towards Lamartine : Nature is not a mother but a tomb (*La Maison du berger*). But, at least, may not man turn his eyes towards Heaven ? Does the Deity give a solution for his anguish ? No, God is indifferent, and man "*ne répondra plus que par un froid silence, Au silence éternel de la Divinité*" (*Le Mont des Oliviers*). Let man then shut himself up in a surly stoicism. Like the wolf cornered by the hunters, "*qu'il meure sans parler*" (*La Mort du loup*). However, he can find relief from his unhappiness in pity and love for his fellows ; he can "*aimer la majesté des souffrances humaines*" (*La Maison du berger*) ; he can struggle with Nature and conquer her (*La Sauvage*) ; and above all he can prepare progress for future humanity ; let him do his work without waiting for any reward or immediate result ; if this work is really great, some day it will be understood and productive (*La Bouteille à la mer*).



PORTRAIT OF ALFRED DE VIGNY

From the lithograph by Jean Gigoux (1806-1894).

There is beauty in this pessimism, and Vigny knew how to present his ideas under well-chosen symbols, striking in their simplicity. But, after all,

this is a system, and nothing is less favourable to lyrical inspiration, which comes rather from moral and psychological contradictions in the heart. And this superb indifference to nature deprives his subjects of scenery, of depth, and of what landscapists call atmosphere. This is why Vigny gave us bas-reliefs rather than statues, and sketches rather than pictures. But sometimes he formulates in verses of ideal beauty the anger or the resignation of his pride ; *La Maison du berger*, *La Mort du loup* and *Le Mont des Oliviers* contain a few of the most perfect lines in French philosophical poetry.

### ALFRED DE MUSSET (1810-1857).

**Biography and Works.**—Alfred de Musset was born in Paris. His family had already been distinguished in literature, and among his ancestors was Ronsard's *Cassandre*. When still very young, he frequented the Cénacle of the Arsenal, where he was welcomed as a sort of "enfant terrible" of romanticism. Perhaps without intending to do so, he wittily parodied its excesses in his first verses : *Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie* (1830). These were followed by *Le Spectacle dans un fauteuil* (1832), including *La Coupe et les Lèvres*, *A quoi rêvent les jeunes filles*, and *Namouna*.—All the verses written between 1829 and 1835 form the collection known as *Premières Poésies*.

After 1835 Musset published his finest pieces in the *Revue des Deux-Mondes* : the *Stances à la Malibran*, *Les Nuits*, *La Lettre à Lamartine*, *L'Espoir en Dieu*, etc., which bear the title *Poésies nouvelles* (1836-1852). At the same time he wrote tales, comedies, an autobiographical novel : *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle*. Received into the French Academy in 1832, he died prematurely in Paris, in 1857.

Musset's masterpieces, in the different lyrical genres, are : *Rolla* (1833), a poem without any precise plan, but containing eloquent passages, a trifle over-rhetorical ; *Les Nuits* :—the *Nuit de Mai* (1835), the *Nuit de Décembre* (1835), the *Nuit d'août* (1836), the *Nuit d'Octobre* (1837). The finest are the first and the last.

*Nuit de mai* : A betrayed passion leaves a cruel wound in the poet's heart ; the Muse, with whom he is speaking, invites him to resume his lyre ; he has no further wish to sing ; vainly the Muse enumerates all the themes which might tempt his inspiration ; he refuses. Then the Muse says : *Rien ne nous rend si grands qu'une grande douleur...* and : *Les plus désespérés sont les chants les plus beaux*. She recalls to his mind the legend of the pelican, who stabs her own heart in order to feed her children with its blood... But the poet ends with a last refusal ; his grief is too recent (1). *Nuit d'Octobre* : The poet

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 970.

seems to be consoled ; he receives the Muse joyfully, and is willing to tell her of his love, of which he thinks himself cured. But, the memory of his betrayal excites him, and he bursts out in impassioned reproaches. The Muse calms him, and teaches him the value of grief : *L'homme est un apprenti, la douleur est son maître, Et nul ne se connaît tant qu'il n'a pas souffert*. The poet gradually grows calm, and goes away with the Muse to sing of awakened nature. This *Nuit d'Octobre* is really a drama, and a masterpiece of composition and psychology (1).

The *Lettre à Lamartine* is a magnificent profession of spiritual faith (2). It is completed by *L'Espoir en Dieu* (1838) (3) and *Le Souvenir* (1841).—In the *Stances à la Malibran* (1836), Musset weeps for the death of a great artist, who has given her life for her art.—In the delicious piece of badinage entitled "*Sur trois marches de marbre rose*" (1840) (4), there is amazing wit and virtuosity. We should mention also : *Une Soirée perdue* (1840) (5), which contains a eulogy of Molière, justly celebrated, *le Saule* (6), *Silvia* (7), etc.

Musset was only partially a romanticist. It is true he wrote the *Côtes d'Espagne et d'Italie*, *Les Marrons du feu*, etc., but his romanticism is only a mischievous trick ; Musset amuses himself by borrowing another's instrument, and play-



PORTRAIT OF ALFRED DE MUSSET AS A PAGE  
From the lithograph by Achille Devéria (1800-1857).

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 974.

— (2) *Id.*, 1st cycle, p. 447. — (3) *Id.*, 2nd cycle, p. 976.

— (4) *Id.*, 2nd cycle p. 980. — (5) *Id.*, 2nd cycle, p. 978.

— (6) *Id.*, 1st cycle, p. 446. — (7) *Id.*, 1st cycle, p. 448.

ing it in order to mystify the public. And Musset was perhaps deceived by his own trick; perhaps the *Ballade à la lune*, *La Coupe et les Lèvres*, and *Rolla*



ALFRED DE MUSSET  
AS A DANDY

From a portrait by Eugène Lami  
(1800-1890).

seemed to him to be masterpieces, when suddenly he was shaken by a terrible crisis. Farewell, then, to local colour, imitation, melodramatic love and declamation. "Ah, frappe-toi le cœur, c'est là qu'est le génie!" Musset no longer thought of anything but to sing his despair, and his memories. He became the greatest poet of sincere and deceived love. Once this crisis over, he was no longer a romanticist at all, not even like Lamartine, whom he resembles in *Les Nuits*, *L'Espoir en Dieu* and *Le Souvenir*. He became an almost classical poet, above all else spiritual, possessed of a discreet sensibility, an heir of La Fontaine (1) and Marivaux. He wrote, about romanticism, the ironical and cruel *Lettres de Dupuis et Cotonet*. Traditional critics, like Nisard, claim him; in fact, it is possible that some day he will be classed apart as an entirely independent poet.

**MINOR POETS.**—A few lyrical poets of this period may be noted (1815 to 1850):—**Casimir Delavigne** (1793-1843). We shall speak elsewhere of his dramas and comedies (2). As a lyrical poet he acquired renown by his *Messéniennes* (1815-1822), political odes inspired by current events (*Waterloo*, *La Dévastation du Musée*) or by history (*Jeanne d'Arc*). This poetry, while always sincere and generous, seems to us now to lack movement and style. But his contemporaries placed him alongside of Lamartine.—**Béranger** (1780-1857) achieved popularity and glory by his songs. A liberal under the Restoration, he sang of the soldiers of the Empire with emotion, and wittily bantered the government. His songs,

which appeared in the newspapers, and went the rounds of both the salons and the cafés, were gathered into three successive collections in 1815, 1821 and 1833. As their chief value lay in topical allusions, they have deteriorated

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 448.

(2) On Musset's plays, cf. p. 779.



with time, but a few have survived : *La Sainte-Alliance*, *Le Vieux Drapeau*, *La Bonne vieille* (2), *Les Hirondelles*, *Le Vieux sergent* (2), etc.—**Emile Deschamps** (1791-1871) gathered his principal poems into his *Études françaises et étrangères* (1828), the Preface of which is an excellent document for the critical history of romanticism.

**Auguste Brizeux** (1806-1858), the most distinguished of the French "poets of the soil", has written harmonious verses about Brittany. He was a disciple of Lamartine, whom he sometimes resembles in subject and form. But, even in his best poem, *Marie* (1836), he recalls but dimly the author of *Jocelyn*. He also wrote *Bretons* (1845), *Histoires poétiques* (1855), and a translation of Dante's *Divina Comedia* (1853).

**Auguste Barbier** (1805-1882).—There are few examples in the history of poetry of a fame so quickly acquired and so ill sustained. In 1830, Barbier published several satirical pieces inspired by the Revolution of July : *La Curée*, *Le Lion*, *Quatre-vingt-treize*, *La Popularité*, *Napoléon*, etc., which he gathered in a volume under the title of *Iambes*. Its success was immediate and resounding. But though Barbier published other poems afterwards, the public remained indifferent, and would never recognise him except as the author of those moral and political verses, of such superbe élan, with their irritated, eloquent tone, their nervous style, violent and full of imagery, and their boldness which sometimes ended in cynicism (3).

**Victor de Laprade** (1812-1883).—Laprade is the most distinguished of the imitators of Lamartine. Though he had not as much genius as the latter, his idealism is purer and his morality firmer. But he lacks variety. In his not inconsiderable work, a few pieces containing deep thought and of a happy turn of expression will always be preserved, such as *La Mort d'un chêne*, *Les Hautes Cimes*, etc. His principal collections of verse are : *Psyché* (1841), *Poèmes évangéliques* (1852), *Symphonies* (1855), etc. He also produced several works in prose, the most original of which are devoted to pedagogical questions.

## II. — TRANSITION.

**THÉOPHILE GAUTIER** (1811-1872).—Th. Gautier believed at first in his vocation as a painter. It was as an art student, pupil of Rioult, that he took part in the "bataille d'Hernani," and scandalised the Philistines with his cherry-coloured doublet, his water-green pantaloons, and his nut-gray overcoat. He published his first verses towards the end of 1830, without revealing any special merit except sureness of touch. In 1833, his originality began to be

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 458.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 991.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 993.

evident in *Albertus*, in which he showed himself to be rather an exaggerated romanticist ; but in the same year, with a sudden change of mind which recalls Musset's, he made fun of his friends in *Les Jeune-France*. At this time he began to write for the reviews and papers ; and it was in 1837 that he became



PORTRAIT OF THÉOPHILE GAUTIER IN 1838

From a lithograph by Célestin Nanteuil (1813-1873).

art and dramatic critic on *La Presse* in 1845, going over to the *Moniteur*. During all his life he complained of this enslaving work, to which however he had condemned himself by vocation ; for whatever may be said, he had in him the stuff of a true critic, though an impressionist one. He continued to publish verse and novels : *La Comédie de la mort* (1838), *Émaux et Camées* (1852), *Le Roman de la momie* (1856), *Le Capitaine Fracasse* (1863) ; and books of travel : *Tra los montes* (*Voyage en Espagne*, 1839), *Italia* (1852), *Constantinople* (1854), *Voyage en Russie* (1866).

Théophile Gautier was the first to practice "art for art's sake." He reacted against the "hypertrophy of the Ego" (1), against the perpetual effusions of sentiment (Lamartine), the despair of disappointed love

(Musset), against the philosophical or political pretensions of poets (Vigny, Hugo). According to Gautier, the poet is a man who observes the external world, and describes in plastic coloured verse its various aspects. This does not mean that he would banish all idea of poetry in itself, but he expects none from his reader who, before a picture or a silhouette, will experience only feelings such as he would have before reality itself. Thus Gautier was, before every-

(1) This witty definition of exaggerated romanticism is Brunetière's.

thing else, a great artist, who perhaps, in the midst of romanticism, saved the French language and versification from a sort of verbal and rhythmical diffuseness. His masterpiece is *Émaux et Camées*.

**BAUDELAIRE** (1821-1867).—Baudelaire can be claimed both by the Parnassians and the Symbolists. He had a strange mind, a morbid sensibility, a taste for the rare and the false and a scorn for the simple and the true, and a passion for form and rhythm—all the virtues and all the defects which were to develop in both schools. One collection of poems only, *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857), made his reputation. We find in these verses an unhealthy melancholy, and a shocking realism, but here and there exquisite elegance. Baudelaire has left an excellent translation of the works of Edgar Allen Poe.

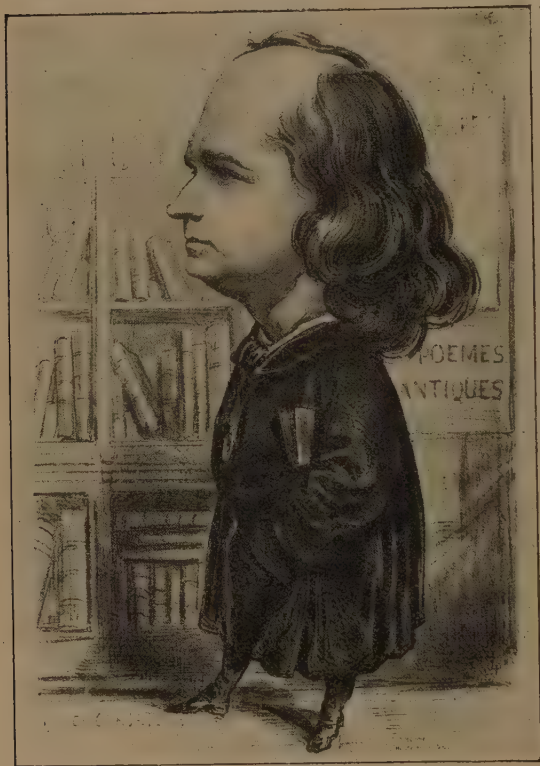
**THÉODORE DE BANVILLE** (1823-1891) is related more definitely to Théophile Gautier and the Parnassians. He carries to excess the doctrine of "art for art's sake," and seems to apply himself exclusively to richness of rhyme. He has set forth his theories in his *Petit traité de versification française* (1872). His principal books are: *Les Cariatides* (1842), *Les Stalactites* (1846), *Odelettes* (1857), and *Odes funambulesques* (1857). Banville doubtless seeks above everything else the effects of rhythm and rhyme, and the greater part of his short pieces are only valuable for their form; but he was not quite sincere in railing at thought and sentiment, because he is more than once most happily inspired, and his talent as a wielder of the chisel does not prevent his possession of both finesse and sensibility (1).

### III. — LE PARNASSE.

In 1866 the bookseller Lemaire published, under the title of *Parnasse*, a collection comprising verses by Leconte de Lisle, Sully Prudhomme, J.-M. de Hérédia, A. Silvestre, Léon Dierx, F. Coppée, Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, A. Theuriot, Stéphane Mallarmé, Verlaine, etc. The reunion of these writers was only momentary, and one Parnassian at least soon left the *Parnasse*. Leaving aside the complete disagreement between Mallarmé and Verlaine, the chiefs of the symbolistic movement, the differences between Leconte de Lisle and Hérédia and Coppée and Sully Prudhomme were soon to be evident. Though the Parnassian school was devoted to plastic beauty, rhythm, and impersonality developed to the point of indifference, the name *Parnassian* could only be exactly applied to Leconte de Lisle and Hérédia. The rest, like Sully Prudhomme and F. Coppée, though called Parnassians, were simply poets with no other distinction than their own illustrious names.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 996

**LECONTE DE LISLE** (1818-1894).—Born on Réunion Island, Leconte de Lisle travelled in the Indies and the Sonde islands. There his eyes were filled with the colour which he was later to transfer to his verse. He afterwards lived in Rennes, where he studied history and Greek; but at this epoch (1844),



PORTRAIT-CARICATURE OF LECONTE DE LISLE  
From a lithograph by Carjat (born in 1828).

he published banal verses which, when he became famous, had been forgotten by everybody, even himself. In 1846 he settled in Paris, and devoted himself to Greek poetry (translations of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, etc.), and to politics (slavery). In 1852 he published his *Poèmes antiques*, with a Preface (1) which is a program of the new poetry; in 1854 his *Poèmes et Poésies*; in 1862 his *Poèmes barbares*. He then became the recognized leader of the Parnassian school. In 1873 he presented himself unsuccessfully to the French Academy, and at every new election he failed again, though Victor Hugo always voted for him. And it was Victor Hugo he succeeded in 1886.

In the Preface of the *Poèmes antiques* (1), 1852, we find the definition of this school of poetry: "... Although art can give, in a certain measure, a general character to

everything it handles, there is vanity and even profanation in the public avowal of the anguish of the heart. On the other hand, however vivid may be the political passions of our time, they belong to the world of action, not to the domain of speculation. This explains the impersonality and neutrality of these studies... We must take refuge in a life of contemplation and learn-

(1) This Preface no longer appears in the edition.



ing, as in a sanctuary of repose and purification... Art and science, so long separated in consequence of the divergent effects of human intelligence, should tend to a close union, or even to be confounded one in the other. One has been the primitive revelation of the ideal as contained in external nature, the other, a reasoned study and enlightening exposition of it. But art has lost this intuitive spontaneity, or rather has exhausted it; it is for science to restore to it the sense of its forgotten traditions, reviving them in their own proper forms."

This anti-romanticist program once set forth, we should mark, with F. Brunetière, the three inspirations of Leconte de Lisle: 1° Antiquity, under two forms: Greco-pagan (*Hypatie, La Vénus de Milo, Niobé, L'Enfance d'Héraklès*, etc. and *Les Erinyes*, a drama in three acts imitated from Æschylus, *Orestes*), and Hindoo or Buddhistic (*Bhagavat, Surya, La Vision de Brama*);—2° Exoticism: the author's inclination for Buddhism unites with his memories of travel, and inspires him with his brilliant descriptions (*Le Bernica, La Fontaine aux Lianes*), and his descriptions of animals (*Le Rêve du jaguar, Les Éléphants, La Panthère noire, Le Sommeil du condor*);—3° Pessimism, which in his case results from scientific positivism, paganism and Buddhism. In pieces like *Midi*, and *Nox*, Leconte de Lisle's pessimism is clearly different from that of Vigny, in that it seeks consolation or oblivion in nature ("O mers, ô bois songeurs... Vous avez apaisé ma tristesse profonde"). In the admirable poem entitled *Dies iræ*, the poet sings the annihilation of death, which he asks to return to us "le repos que la vie a troublé."

As a writer, Leconte de Lisle forges robust and sonorous verses, slightly rigid; his language shows the effort, successful, it is true, of an artist who wishes to achieve precision, plasticity and brilliance (1).

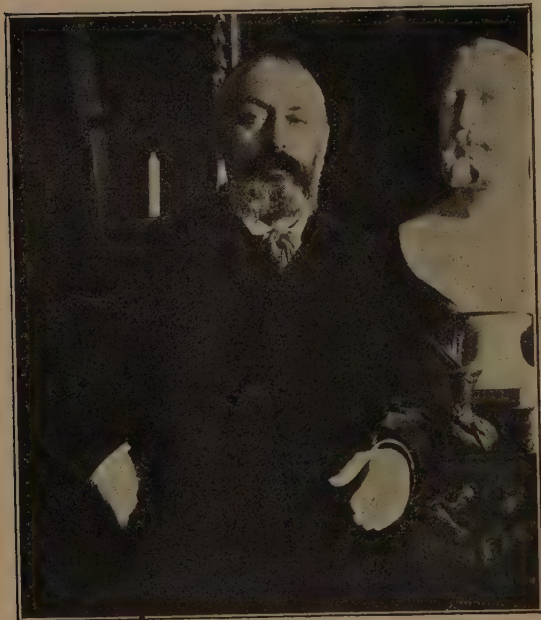
**J.-M. DE HÉRÉDIA** (1842-1905).—Hérédia, born in Santiago de Cuba, brought up in France; remained faithful to the *Par'nasse*. He published in reviews, one by one, the sonnets which were collected in 1893 under the title: *Les Trophées*. Never did Boileau's famous formula: *Un sonnet sans défaut vaut seul un long poème*, appear so true. Each of these sonnets is indeed a poem, of such close and learned composition that one is never tired of re-reading them in order to understand them better, and written in a style at once so full and brilliant and in such perfect rhythm, that they are a joy to the eye as well as to the ear. The most frequently quoted are: *Le Chevrier, Némée, La Trebbia, Soir de bataille, Antoine et Cléopâtre, Les Conquérants* (2).

**SULLY PRUDHOMME** (1839-1908).—It was by the study of science that Sully Prudhomme prepared himself to be a poet. This resulted in the remarkable precision with which he noted his own sensations or psychology in

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1376.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1379.

general. With a soul always in vibration, and linked to the whole world by "innombrables liens frères et douloureux," Sully Prudhomme expresses the most delicate and true nuances in a crystal-clear style, with no effort for colour, no declamation or affectation. A Parnassian just long enough to learn his craft thoroughly, he believed, and with reason, that poetry should be intimate



PORTRAIT OF SULLY PRUDHOMME  
From a photograph by Dornac.

and philosophical, and that the external world is only interesting as a sublime enigma which appeals to our thought. The *Stances et Poèmes* (1865-1866) contain, among the most remarkable pieces: *Le Vase brisé*, *L'Habitude*, and the whole of the exquisite series called *Jeunes Filles*.—*Les Épreuves et les Solitudes* (1866-1872): *Première Solitude*, *La Voie lactée*, *La Lyre et les Doigts*, *Le Missel*, etc.—*Les Vaines Tendresses* (1872) includes perhaps the finest pieces: *Aux amis inconnus*, *La Coupe*, *L'Étoile au cœur*, etc.—*Le Zénith* (1878) is a short poem about the catastrophe of the balloon known by that name.—Later Sully Prudhomme wrote philosophical and symbolical poems, longer and somewhat cold, like *La Justice* (1878) and *Le*

*Bonheur* (1888). Finally, he published several very distinguished philosophical studies: a Preface to his translation of the first book of Lucretius and a study of Pascal; and he collected under the title of *Testament poétique* (1901) some critical writings in which there is a very interesting discussion with the symbolists on the necessity for rhythm in verse (1).

**FRANÇOIS COPPÉE** (1842-1908).—The poet of intimate things, of the humble, of the trifling realities of daily life, Coppée knew how to draw forth a penetrating and delicate perfume from these banalities. It was his belief

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1381.

that poetry can do without great subjects or heroes, but that man, for the reason alone that he suffers, loves, hopes and resigns himself, is intense poetic material. We may discuss his system, for a system it really is: we know in advance that Coppée will select a "small grocer of Montrouge", a "*petit bourgeois*", an "engineer on the Northern Railway," etc., and that he will place them in an ordinary environment, minutely studied. Although Coppée, in spite of this trivial background, cultivates exquisite poetic flowers, we may be permitted to prefer the charming melancholy of his *Arrière-Saison* (1887), and the philosophic and religious beauty of the *Paroles sincères* (1890). Many other poems in his numerous books prove that his was a delicate and not altogether healthy soul, that he was the heir of Lamartine and of Musset, the rival of Sully Prudhomme, and that he made for himself a genre, slightly artificial, of poetic naturalism.—We shall speak elsewhere of his fine plays in verse (1). Some pieces of his, such as *La Lettre d'un mobile breton*, *La Veillée*, *La Bénédiction*, appear now be altogether old-fashioned (2).

**ALBERT SAMAIN** (1853-1900).—We may further class among the Parnassians Albert Samain, who has published three collections of verse: *Au Jardin de l'Enfance* (1893), *aux Flancs du Vase* (1898), and *le Chariot d'Or* (1900), as well as a two-act dramatic study: *Polyphème*.

Samain hands on the tradition of André Chénier by the delicate and sculptural precision of his descriptive verse; but his work has the additional quality of a warm, picturesque and occasionally brilliant realism. Sometimes objective and cold, he has often expressed melancholy and pain with the most subtle sincerity. Symbolism has supplied him with images, but has never obscured his fundamentally French limpidity. Albert Samain will rank among our best poets.

We may further name M. Jean RICHEPIN, who, by virtue of his mastery of words and rhythm, is a genuine Parnassian. But from the point of view of the subjects which he has chosen for treatment, we should rank him with the *realists* or *naturalists* of poetry. The most original of his collections is *la Chanson des Gueux* (1876), in which he has made a clever and rather artificial use of popular slang.

**STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ** (1842-1898) was a delicate and refined poet, attracted by the mystery of ideas, and, in his detestation of the commonplace, he is often obscure and almost unintelligible. He did not aim at analysis or description, but only at *suggestion*, and his process was one of evocations and allusions. His best poems, exquisite and clear at the same time, are *l'Après-midi d'un Faune*, *les Fenêtres* and *l'Azur*.

But the numerous disciples who gathered round him and for the most part had neither his searching intelligence nor his profound knowledge of the French language, pushed his doctrines to extremes. Under pretext of putting more

(1) Cf. p. 783.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1384.

suppleness into verse, they robbed it of its rhythm and music, and their poetry frequently resembles a doctored prose, cut up into unequal lines at the caprice of the printer. In their dread of the commonplace, they fell into an obscurity all the more aggravating as behind its veils of mystery there is nothing to be found but an empty void. Their vocabulary is as vague as that of a foreigner with an imperfect knowledge of our language, and their syntax is a challenge to logic and good sense. We note indeed that a certain number of *symbolist* poets are of foreign extraction... and that is their excuse.

But still, among Mallarmé's disciples and successors, a few poets of genuine talent succeeded in getting novel effects out of this new poetical departure and in combining the musical freedom of Verlaine with the precision of the Parnassians.

Although the verses of Francis JAMMES (born in 1868) often resemble prose, one cannot but accord to the poet of *l'Angelus de l'Aube à l'Angelus du Soir*, and *les Géorgiques chrétiennes* a fine sentiment of nature and the gift of evoking very personal and very human impressions in words that are at the same time simple and unhackneyed.

A great and extremely personal talent must be allowed to a poet like Jean MORÉAS (1836-1910), whose *les Syrtes* (1884) *les Cantilènes* (1886) and *les Stances* (1899) take us back to the purity of André Chénier.

We may further quote Maurice METERLINCK, Ephraïm MIKHAEL, RIMBAUD, RODENBACH, Émile VERHEREN.

But the most accomplished example of a Parnassian who has successfully borrowed certain processes and rhythms from symbolism, is that of Mr Henri de RÉGNIER (born in 1864). An enthusiast at the outset for free verse and yet always clear, Henri de Régnier has arrived, in the most adroit manner, at fusing all the best material of the two schools. A poem like *le Vase* will pass for the masterpiece of this fusion.

The principal collections of Henri de Régnier are : *les Jeux rustiques et divins* (1897), *les Médailles d'Argile* (1900), *la Sandale Ailée* (1907).

Let us close this list in naming among our numerous poetesses the Comtesse de NOAILLES, whose verses at one moment recall Lamartine by their spontaneous and harmonious ease, at another are marked by a rare and emotional subtlety. Her chief collections are : *le Cœur innombrable* (1901), *l'Ombre des Jours* (1902), *les Éblouissements* (1907), *les Vivants et les Morts* (1910).

### III. — SYMBOLISM.

The history of art is made up of a succession of reactions. After Romanticism came ; *Le Parnasse* after the Parnassians came the Symbolists. The latter not only accused Th. Gautier, Leconte de Lisle and Hérédia of being materialistic, attaching too much value to form, but Sully Prudhomme and Coppée also seemed to them to smother thought and sentiment under the weight and precision of their verse.



For **PAUL VERLAINE** (1844-1896), poetry was nothing more than impulsive music, capriciously rhymed, having neither "composition" nor "eloquence." He was a born poet, and his sensibility, ranging from unconscious cynicism to the most delicate and mystical religious feeling, produced a few admirable pieces in his *Poèmes saturniens*, his *Romances sans paroles* and especially in his *Sagesse* (1).

### BIBLIOGRAPHY.

The *Works* of the poets under consideration, mentioned in their place in this chapter. We recommend especially a reading of the *Prefaces* to the *Works*, in which the poets themselves have defined their work so happily that criticism has only to note what they say.

F. BRUNETIÈRE, *L'Évolution de la poésie lyrique au dix-neuvième siècle*, Paris, 1895, in which will be found, at the beginning of each chapter, an indication of the chief works devoted to the different schools.

Among the collections published for the use of students, may be noted : — VICTOR HUGO, *Extraits* (poésie, prose, théâtre), 3 vols. Delagrave. — LAMARTINE, *Œuvres choisies*, par R. Waltz, 2 vol. Hachette. — A. DE VIGNY, *Œuvres choisies*, Delagrave.

AD. VAN BEVER et P. LÉAUTAUD, *Poètes d'aujourd'hui*. Paris, *Mercur de France*, 1918, 2 vol.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1000.



PAGE ORNAMENT

Taken from a romanticist edition of the *Works* of Lamartine.



THE BOULEVARD DU TEMPLE

This lithograph, which dates from about 1830, represents the continued line formed by the Curius and Bobèche theatres, the Cirque Franconi, the Gaité, the Funambules, Madame Saqui and the Petit Lazari.

## CHAPTER V.

### ROMANTIC DRAMA.

#### SUMMARY

1° The Romantic drama is a combination of **melodrama** and **historic tragedy**. — The theory was set forth by Victor Hugo in *La Préface de Cromwell* (1827): disregard of the unities, an admixture of genres, the union of the sublime and the grotesque, and the freest versification were the chief points.

2° **VICTOR HUGO** produced *Cromwell* in 1827, *Marion Delorme*, in 1829, *Hernani* in 1830, etc. *Les Burgraves*, in 1843, was only partially successful and Hugo renounced the theatre.—His plays, with regard to **action** and **characters**, would seem weak, if they were not redeemed by their **poetry**.

3° **DUMAS père** produced in 1829 *Henri III et sa cour*, an historical drama in prose. After this he devoted himself more and more to melodrama.

4° **A. DE VIGNY** imitated Dumas in his *La Maréchale d'Ancre* (1831), but was more original in *Chatterton* (1835), a drama of passion as well as a play with a purpose. He was the first to translate *Othello* completely (1829).

5° **A. DE MUSSET** did not write his *Comédies et Proverbes* for the stage, and so did not trouble himself about theatrical conventions; but these plays were found to be more dramatic, in the true sense of the word, than those of Victor Hugo. They present the most piquant mixture of truth and fancy.

6° A classical reaction took place in 1842 with Ponsard's *Lucrèce*; but it did not last long, and Ponsard himself finished by writing an historical drama, *Charlotte Corday*, and some bourgeois comedies (*l'Honneur et l'argent*).

7° Towards the end of the century there was a return to drama in verse, in the romanticist form, in such plays as **COPPÉE'S** and **RICHEPIN'S**.

## I. — HOW THE ROMANTIC DRAMA WAS FORMED.



DECORATED LETTER  
taken from *Paule et Virginie*,  
Curmer edition, 1838.

**elodrama.** — During the reign of Louis XIII there was a confused and extravagant genre known as tragi-comedy, which might have developed into a sort of heroic drama half Shakespearean, half Spanish. But the tendencies of the French mind towards reason soon banished tragi-comedy from the stage. Under the Consulate and the Empire, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, while pseudo-classical imitations still held the stage of the solemn Théâtre-Français, another genre,—less confused than the tragi-comedy but no less extravagant,—drew the public to the Ambigu, the Gaité and the Porte-Saint-Martin : this was melodrama. The Revolution, in fact, had trans-

formed the public. The people, formerly contented with mountebanks and fun-makers, felt the need of nobler dramatic emotions. Guilbert de Pixérécourt was their Corneille, and Caigniez their Racine (1).

When we look over the repertory of melodramas played between 1800 and 1830, we are surprised to find so many historical and chivalric subjects borrowed from the French or German Middle Ages, from the Italy of the Renaissance, and from Catholic or Moorish Spain. The plots are mysterious, there are vaults and trap-dungeons, and always a villain. The comic, or rather the grotesque, is mingled with the tragedy ; and beside the villain, the simpleton, peasant or soldier, the buffoon or the valet excite laughter in order to offset the painful emotions of the audience, like the *gracioso* in Spanish plays. The scenery was varied and brilliant, with ingenious tricks and surprises which enchanted the naïve spectators. The denouement was nearly always happy, the honest characters being saved and rewarded, while the villain was punished. Finally, the melodrama was written in prose, in a style affectedly realistic, an admixture of platitudes and pathos. But this style thrills the audience.

**Resemblance and Difference between the Melodrama and the Romantic Drama.**—We recognise in melodrama a few of the essential elements of the romantic drama : as, for instance, subjects borrowed from modern French or foreign history, complicated and gloomy plots, admixture of the serious and the laughable, and importance given to scenery and local colour. It may be truly said that, in a certain sense, romantic drama is only glorified melodrama. But, if melodrama would supersede tragedy, it must undergo such very

(1) Cf. p. 710.

important changes, that it may be said with equal truth that romantic drama is



PORTRAIT OF FREDERICK LEMAITRE

This lithograph represents the great dramatic actor in his famous role of Robert Macaire in the Melodrama *L'Auberge des Adrets*.

essentially different from melodrama. — First, as to style. The genre, owing to the change of theatre and public, renounced one of its liberties to accommodate itself to the usage of the fashionable society to which it was now introduced. The romantic drama of Victor Hugo is generally written in verse, and in the theatre verse is an entirely classical convention like the long coat and white necktie of society. On a few occasions Hugo wrote in prose, and Vigny's and Musset's plays are also in prose. But theirs is a noble and poetical prose. Dumas *père*, alone, is related to Pixérécourt. The second essential difference between romantic drama and melodrama, lies in the fact that the denouement of the melodrama is happy, while that of the romantic drama is unhappy. And this characteristic alone would be sufficient to preserve *Hernani* and *Chatterton* from a humiliating comparison with *L'Homme aux trois visages* or the *Courrier de Lyon*. Thanks to the unhappy ending, in fact, one of the principles of pure classic tragedy is preserved, namely, pity. The other principle, terror, though excited in melodrama seems only a trick, as we are assured in advance that the denouement will release us. But, terror and pity, one regulated by the other, leave in romantic drama, as well as in tragedy, that impression of majestic sadness of which Racine

speaks, and this assures to the genre the same dignity as that of tragedy.

**Influence of Tragedy.**—If indeed romantic drama felt the influence of melodrama, it was on the other hand, and almost in spite of itself, strongly affected by tragedy. The latter had remained stationary in appearance only. The background was the same, but the contents of the play had been incessantly renewed. A few fierce romanticists had exclaimed: "May we be deliv-



ered from the Greeks and the Romans!" It was time that the Greeks and Romans gave up their hold on classic tragedy. We have only to glance over the tragedies acted from 1815 to 1830 to see what place was occupied by modern history. Here are *Les Vêpres siciliennes* by C. Delavigne (1819), *Louis IX* by Ancelot (1819), *Jeanne d'Arc à Rouen* by Davrigny (1819), *Charles de Navarre* by Brifaut (1820), *Comte Julien* by Guiraud (1823), *Le Maire du Palais* by Ancelot (1823), *Pierre de Portugal* by Arnault (1823), *Jeanne d'Arc* by Soumet (1825), *Louis XI* by Mély-Janin (1827), etc. And we have only mentioned here the tragedies in five acts, in verse, in which the classical unities are respected. One can see that the subjects are neither Greek nor Roman.

**Criticism.**—The positions taken by the critics of this period were as follows: There are only a few belated people who ask that antique subjects alone should be handled in connection with the unities; all the rest separate into two schools: 1° Those who say: Let us seek new subjects; let us exploit the history of France and of other countries; let us imitate the masterpieces of foreign literatures;—but let us preserve the classical form. This meant applying to tragedy Chénier's precept: "*Sur des pensées nouveaux faisons des vers antiques*".—2° Those who said: For new subjects, historical and foreign, a new form would be suitable. Complete independence for the dramatic poet.—This second opinion was upheld, from 1819 to 1830, in the literary journals (*Lycée français*, *Globe*, *Revue française*, etc.), by eminent critics like Charles de Rémusat, Ch. Loyson, P. Dubois, Magnin, etc.

In 1825 appeared Prosper Mérimée's *Théâtre de Clara Gazul*, a collection of short pieces attributed by their author to a Spanish actress; and here we find the freedom of Shakespeare united to the fancy of Calderon.

Therefore, when Victor Hugo wrote *Cromwell* (1827), or Alexandre Dumas wrote *Christine* (1828), and produced on the stage *Henri III et sa Cour* (1829), they associated themselves with a contemporary movement. The genre they perfected, and at length consecrated by their "masterpieces," had been prepared by historical melodrama, historical tragedy, by the audacious and piquant experiment of Mérimée and above all by criticism. They took from melodrama, much more than from Shakespeare, its freedom and variety; and from tragedy they took its terror, pity and dignity of style.

And, speaking of Shakespeare, we should add that the representations given by the troupe of English actors in Paris in 1828, had also contributed to prepare the public for the success of *Henri III* and of *Hernani* (1).

(1) Concerning this preparation of the romantic drama, according to contemporary witnesses see *Presse littéraire sous la Restauration*, pp. 318-372.

## II. — THE THEORIES.

These theories are brilliantly expounded in the celebrated Preface to *Cromwell*, which Victor Hugo wrote in 1827. It has been regarded as the manifesto of the young dramatic school — yet it was not very original (1). All Hugo's ideas are to be found in the current criticism of his time. Mme de Staël, by



“ PEGASE ROMANTIQUE ”

The principal riders carried by the crab are the painter Eugène Delacroix, Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas. The caricaturist gives them this motto: « Nothing is beautiful but ugliness, ugliness only is lovable. »

her analyses of Shakespeare, Goëthe and Schiller, had spread among the educated public a taste and desire for a freer dramatic form. The journals of the time, *Le Conservateur littéraire*, *La Muse française*, *Le Lycée français*, *Le Globe*, etc., in their discussions of new plays, indicated the way to substitute a

(1) See MAURICE SOURIAU's *Introduction* to his édition of the *Préface de Cromwell* (1897), pp. 1-38

new and living genre for worn-out tragedy. The famous Manzoni (1), replying to a criticism of his first drama, *Carmagnola*, published in 1820 a *Lettre sur les unités*, to which Fauriel must have contributed, and which is the most discriminating and judicious discussion produced on the classical system. But who had read this learned study? The Théâtre-Français continued to close its doors against novelties, and the public went on with its traditional admirations. Hugo, suiting his effort to the resistance, made heavy and noisy ammunition out of Preface, which he crammed with paradoxes and antitheses, clothed in a brilliant style. This time both the public and the authors were hit.

**Analysis of the Preface to *Cromwell*.**—Hugo first gives a comprehensive glance to the development of poetry throughout the history of mankind. Poetry awoke in the world with man himself; but it was then wholly ecstatic and adoring, altogether lyrical. As humanity developed and became active, poetry became epic. Genesis represents lyricism; Homer incarnates the epic, which keeps its essential characteristics when, instead of being sung or recited, it is put upon the stage. "All the ancient authors of tragedy", says Hugo, "retail Homer—the same fables, the same catastrophes, the same heroes. All draw their water from the Homeric river. It is everlastingly the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* over again. Like Achilles dragging Hector, Greek tragedy revolves around Troy." Finally, Christianity revealed to man his own duality; man turns towards himself, and his heart is for ever divided between the virtues which he ought to practice, and the natural instincts which lead him to evil: it was the dramatic age. —Literally, this thesis cannot be upheld. Sophocles' *Œdipus* and Euripides' *Hippolytus* are dramatic in the narrowest sense of the word. And could we say that modern times are exclusively dramatic, and especially in the nineteenth century when lyricism invaded everything? But this system contains some truth. We cannot deny (and here Hugo only renewed Chateaubriand's admirable thesis), that the analysis of sentiments and passions owes to Christianity both new elements and a new method. Psychology is a modern science; it is through this delicate science that Racine is superior to the ancients and that Shakespeare and Goethe rank before the Greeks in profundity and complexity.

Now, Victor Hugo goes on, the object of the drama is truth, that is to say, the resurrection of the whole of life. It was therefore wrong, according to his ideas, that two separate genres were created in the classical epoch: tragedy for noble and terrible passions, comedy for the absurd ones. On one side, tears; on the other, laughter. Let us unite these two elements, beauty and ugliness, the sublime and the grotesque. "Complete poetry lies in the harmony of opposite things." We should remember this last formula; for Hugo, who excluded the unities of time and place, preserves unity of action, and upholds unity of impression. It remains to find at what point the admixture of the sublime and the ridiculous may be made harmonious. Shakespeare succeeded because he subjected the whole of a play to one controlling idea, and to a powerful use of theatrical laws which resulted in complete unity. But it is not so with *Le Roi s'amuse* and *Lucrèce Borgia*, in which the spectator is conscious of incoherence.—Finally, Hugo makes some very judicious remarks upon the dramatic style in verse. The alexandrine, the traditional tragic metre, should be used in all dramas, but it should be rendered more flexible and coloured, returning to a freedom of treatment

(1) Manzoni (1734-1873), better known as author of *I Promessi Sposi*, produced two dramas: in 1820 *Le Comte de Carmagnola*, and in 1823 *Adelchi*; here he reveals himself as a disciple rather of Goethe than Shakespeare; read the *Lettre in Théâtre de MANZONI*, trad. Latour (Charpentier)

which had been forbidden it for two centuries, with overrunning, displacement of the cæsura, etc.), remaining "faithful to the rhyme, that slave-queen, supreme grace of our poetry," but avoiding the tirade, because it is the character who must speak and not the author.—Victor Hugo did indeed transform the classic alexandrine of old into a marvellous instrument, and in this respect he was an incomparable virtuoso. But he did not keep faith with regard to the tirade; for if ever characters forgot themselves in order to speak for the author, it was *Hernani*, *Ruy-Blas* and *Triboulet* (1)!

Such is, practically, this celebrated Preface, in which young Hugo displayed more metaphors than ideas. His somewhat naïve learning supplied him with examples taken from works which he knew more by reputation than otherwise. But, such as it was, we cannot deny its importance, amply proved by the reception given it by the literary press of the time. There was not a single critic of any standing who did not analyse and discuss it (2).

This general theory of the romantic drama should be supplemented by Victor Hugo's other prefaces at the beginning of each of his plays. The theory of the sublime and the ridiculous, especially, is taken up again in the Prefaces to *Le Roi s'amuse* (1832) and to *Lucrèce Borgia* (1833). It is different with the Prefaces to *Marie Tudor* (1834) and *Ruy Blas* (1848): these plays are informed with an historical and philosophical sense; here the poet is a thinker and a prophet.

We must not forget, also, that Alfred de Vigny wrote in 1829, at the beginning of his translation of *Othello*, a Letter to Lord XXX, in which the questions of the unities, of style and of freedom in play-writing are treated with perhaps a rather apocalyptic solemnity but always with some critical sense; and, in 1834, at the beginning of *Chatterton*, his *Dernière nuit de travail*, dealing with the moral and social significance of the drama.

A. de Musset expounded no theory about dramatic romanticism, but contented himself with wittily bantering other authors on this subject, in his *Lettres de Dupuis et Cotonet*.

### III. — VICTOR HUGO'S PLAYS (1827-1843).

1827. **Cromwell**.—This play in five acts has never been produced on the stage; both the characters and the verses are too numerous. It is more than anything else an historical study in dramatic form. However, on examining it closely, we see that the action is very simple: the situation rests upon whether Cromwell, Protector, will or will not accept the title of King, which Parliament wishes to bestow upon him. A conspiracy is formed by puritans and cavaliers to seize Cromwell and stab him before he is able to accept the diadem. The first act, a novelty by its movement and variety, shows us the plans and ambitions of the conspirators. The poet displays learning which is sometimes happy in effect, but often confused. He imitates Sir Walter Scott frequently.—The second act shows Cromwell in his home. This scene presents a new

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1003.

(2) See the *Presse littéraire sous la Restauration*, p. 1003.



tableau, not lacking in animation, wit and accuracy, but in which the action does not progress at all.—In the third act, one of the conspirators, Rochester, drinks the narcotic which has been prepared for Cromwell;—and in the fourth act, it is Rochester whom the conspirators are about to attack, taking him for Cromwell. But Cromwell who, disguised, has taken part in their deliberations, orders their arrest.—Finally, in the fifth act, all is ready for Cromwell's coronation. All the dignitaries march in a procession past the platform, all the nation looks on. The man selected to present the crown to Cromwell is to stab him; but Cromwell, forewarned, hypocritically rejects the dangerous honour. He is acclaimed even by his adversaries; but when left alone, he says: "When, then, shall I be king?"

1829. **Marion Delorme.** Read by Hugo to his friends (1), this play was accepted by the Théâtre-Français, but was immediately interdicted by the censorship. It could not be produced on the stage until May, 1831, at the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre: Mme Dorval created the part of *Marion*, and Bocage, *Didier*; later it was given at the Théâtre-Français. Victor Hugo had appealed to M. de Martignac, and the latter had sent him to King Charles X, who refused to oppose his veto to that of the censor.—*Marion Delorme* is not a skilfully composed play, and all the characters are conventional. Young Didier, a mysterious Byronic hero, loves Marion Delorme without knowing her. Despite the edicts of Cardinal de Richelieu, he fights his rival Saverny, and is arrested. Thanks to Marion he escapes. When he learns who is the woman he loves, he delivers himself up to justice. Marion obtains his pardon from King Louis XIII; but the King allows Richelieu to obtain a new condemnation of Didier, and the latter is executed after having forgiven Marion.—The thesis of the play is false, and the historical setting highly disputable, Louis XIII being represented as a puppet, and Richelieu as an executioner. The merit of this drama lies in the vivid and animated, picture it presents of life at court, in châteaux and in the provinces. The second act, in which noblemen of Blois talk about Paris—its duels, its theatres, Corneille, Scudéry, etc.—and in which we see the duel between Didier and Saverny, is marvellously telling. Every detail sparkles. The same is true of the theatrical scenes in Act III. Finally, the play contains a few truly eloquent tirades.

1830 **Hernani.**—This play was given at the Théâtre-Français on February 25, 1830. Its first representation remained famous under the name of The Battle of Hernani (2). Classicists and romanticists discussed its success, verse by verse, the advantage remaining with the younger school.—By its choice of subject and epoch, by the quality and kind of characters, by the action and the denouement, finally by its style, this play is the masterpiece, or the type, of romanticist drama.—The scenery was very romantic—an old family palace at Saragossa in 1519; a street in the city, with the distant noise and the reflections of flames; dark cellars at Aix-la-Chapelle, with Charlemagne's tomb; the terrace of the château and a brilliant ball. The action was not less melodramatic; a spanish grandee, become a bandit under the name of Hernani, pursues the king, Don Carlos, with his hatred; he loves Doña Sol, niece and fiancée of old Don Ruy Gomès de Silva; he would take her from the duke and the king; he disguises himself as a pilgrim in order to approach her, gives himself up to his enemy, and conspires against the king, who becomes emperor; he resumes his own name and his titles, and marries Doña Sol... But he has sworn to Don Ruy Gomès, who has assisted him in getting Doña Sol

(1) This reading took place at Eugène Deveria's; there were present: Baron Taylor, royal commissioner at the Théâtre-Français; Dumas père, A. de Vigny, Émile Deschamps, Sainte-Beuve, Boulanger. The managers of the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre and of the Odeon both wanted the play, but Hugo gave it to the Théâtre-Français, where Mlle Mars was to play *Marion* and Firmin, *Didier*.

(2) See account in GAUTHIER'S *Histoire du romantisme* (Charpentier).

away from the king, that he will die at his signal, and has given Gomès his horn, at the first sound of which Hernani has promised to kill himself. The fatal horn is heard in the midst of the wedding ceremonies, and Hernani and Doña Sol die together while Don Ruy Gomès stabs himself by their side.—The characters are all lyrical in the most complete sense of the word. Carried away by their passions, they come into mutual conflict, and from the shock flash fine verses and splendid metaphors. Only one of the characters is tragic, because he has a will : this is Don Carlos when he becomes Charles the Fifth. Doña Sol, at times, may be regarded as a genuine character. Whatever

may be said of its improbability, *Hernani* will remain a long time yet in the theatrical repertory ; it has the faults, but also the charm of youth (1).



THE BATTLE OF HERNANI  
From a lithograph by J.-J. Grandville (1803-1847).

thesis is too systematic, the plot too melodramatic ; and, above all, whatever may have been the vices of François I, posterity, which forgives and simplifies, will always see in him the conqueror of Marignan, and the protector of the great artists of the Renaissance. *Le Roi s'amuse* has, therefore, no chance of staying in the repertory.

From 1833-1835, Hugo wrote three dramas in prose : *Lucrèce Borgia*, *Marie Tudor*, *Angelo*, *Tyran de Padoue*. The first of these plays, only, has some value, though its thesis and antithesis also are too systematic, and the frequent poisonings and antidotes make it too easy, by far, to parody. *Marie Tudor* is nothing but tiresome declamation ; and *Angelo* pure melodrama.

1838. **Ruy-Blas.**—It was time for Hugo to return to drama in verse ; he had tried to

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 587 ; 2nd cycle, p. 1020.

rival Dumas, and had descended to Pixérécourt. A brilliant awakening took place with *Ruy-Blas*, which was produced on November 8, 1838, by the celebrated Frederick Lemaître for the opening of the Théâtre de la Renaissance. In this play Hugo continued his system of medley of genres, and of antithesis. *Ruy-Blas*, a lackey, is an incarnation of all the virtues of Spain; he is loved by a queen, is made Premier, and reforms the State. Don Salluste, a grandee of Spain, has "the soul of a lackey"; he aspires to nothing but low vengeance. Don César de Bazan, also a great lord, is a bohemian and a thief.—The action is highly improbable. *Ruy-Blas*, now become a grandee and premier, remains the valet, the slave of his master. The latter, who seeks to revenge himself on the queen, unveils to her the true character of *Ruy-Blas*, and tries to force her to elope with him and renounce the throne... *Ruy-Blas* finds himself obliged to kill Don Salluste and poison himself.—All this is extremely singular, and only happens because the author wishes it to happen. But we have immediately to take up the defense of the play, for *Ruy-Blas* is full of charming or terrible scenes, and is a marvel in point of style. From the first to the last line, the versification has an ease, a fancy, a brilliance which defy comparison. When many years later the public and critics were enthusiastic over the style of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, they had all forgotten the first and the fourth acts of *Ruy-Blas*. This and *Hernani* are the only plays of Hugo which are still in the repertory. *Ruy-Blas* will always be like an opera which we applaud for its music though the libretto is absurd. (1)

1843. **Les Burgraves.**—His trip up the Rhine in 1822 had filled the poet's imagination with grandiose and terrible figures, and from these memories he produced *Le Rhin*, his best work in prose, and *Les Burgraves*. We have no space for an analysis of this drama, which is, in reality, an epic melodrama. A crime, the return of an emperor disguised as a monk, an old slave who knows how to use poison and antidote, a mysterious vault in which a son is about to kill his father, whom he does not recognise, to save his betrothed, who already rests in her coffin, but whom the contents of a vial can restore to life, the recognition of two brothers, of a father and son, etc.—a long list of episodes indeed. This resulted in an impression of grandiose incoherence which baffled the public in 1843. In *Les Burgraves* they recognised only its defects, and not its epic beauty. Critics were severe, there were many parodies, and the public, though it did not hiss, merely stayed away. In the following month, Ponsard's *Lucrèce* was enthusiastically applauded, its simplicity proving restful.—In 1900 the Théâtre-Français successfully presented *Les Burgraves* again, and the epic grandeur of the drama, with some admirable scenes, was more deeply appreciated by this generation.

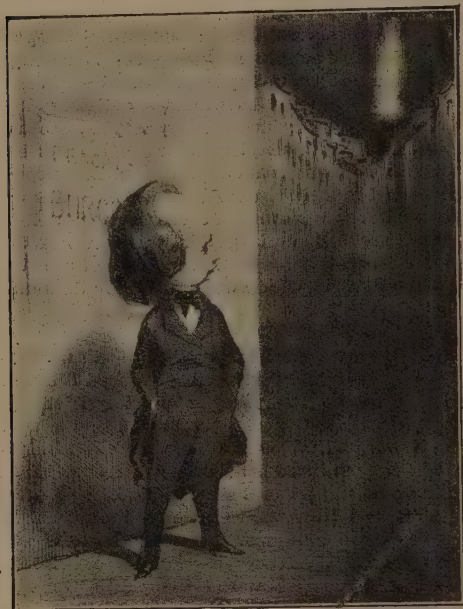
After the failure of *Les Burgraves*, Victor Hugo, who became more and more absorbed in politics, renounced drama, only publishing in 1866 a few short plays under the title *Théâtre en liberté*. It contains some charming things, and happily completes Hugo's work as a playwright; there is fine and witty fancy, as in *La Grand'Mère* or *Mangeront-ils?*; and some Shakespearean fragments like *L'Épée*.—The play, *Torquemada*, was published in 1882 (2).

**General Estimate of Victor Hugo as a Dramatist.**—Let us examine Victor Hugo's originality as a dramatist. — He was not a creator of souls; none of his characters will become the representative type of any human passion; we shall never say "a *Hernani*" or "a *Doña Sol*" as we say "a *Rodrigue*", "a *Chimène*", "a *Hermione*." The poet seems entirely occupied with setting up contrasts of condition, style and costume among his actors. His psychology

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1027.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1031.

lacks depth and universality. Furthermore, his characters are too entirely lyrical, and are used by the author to develop his own manner of thinking and feeling. Being lyrical, they cannot be dramatic; they do not represent will in action, but emotions which are the plays of external events. If we exami-



VICTOR HUGO AFTER THE FAILURE OF LES BURGRAVES

« Hugo, lorgnant les voûtes bleues,  
« Au Seigneur demande tout bas,  
Pourquoi les astres ont des queues,  
Quand les Burgraves n'en ont pas. »

*From a contemporary lithograph.*

ne the action, we find that it does not result logically from the characters themselves, or from the conflict of wills; everything is organised by the author, who wants merely to produce couplets, duets, invective, narratives, etc. It is difficult to find in any dramatic work more artificial or—we must say—more ridiculous plots than those of *Le Roi s'amuse*, *Ruy-Blas* or *Les Burgraves*.

But a few of Hugo's dramas will always be saved from oblivion by their style. This man who did not know how to construct action or develop characters, excelled in composing scenes with a very rare sense of harmony and colour. In these tableaux there is much that is conventional, but there is also movement, art in the scenic display of crowds, and in making the speech and action of the secondary characters amusing. Hugo knows how to make his hero speak, or rather sing, soulfully and with virtuosity. By these qualities, insufficient indeed but rare all the

same, Victor Hugo deserves to retain high rank in the history of nineteenth century drama.

#### IV. — THE PLAYS OF ALEXANDRE DUMAS PÈRE.

**Dumas père (1803-1870).** — In 1824, there was in the offices of Monseigneur le duc d'Orléans (soon to be Louis-Philippe), a young copyist who had a fine handwriting and who passionately loved the theatre. He had already



written in 1825 and 1826 two short vaudevilles, and was in search of a subject, no matter what, when he saw in the Salon of 1827 a bas-relief representing Monaldeschi assassinated by order of Queen Christina of Sweden : he saw in this a denouement. In great haste he read dictionaries and histories to find details concerning these characters, of whose very existence he was ignorant only the day before, and forthwith composed a play in verse containing five acts, a prologue and an epilogue. He managed to get his play read by Baron Taylor, the Royal Commissioner at the Théâtre-Français, through whom it was accepted in the rue de Richelieu (1). Unfortunately the rehearsals were slow, and the play, though accepted, was not acted. But Dumas had already composed another play, *Henri III et sa Cour*, in prose, having found his subject in the work of the historian Anquetil. This time, things went more smoothly ; the play was produced, and its success, February 11, 1829, was astounding.



PORTRAIT OF ALEXANDRE DUMAS

From a lithograph by Achille Déveria (1800-1857).

The action of *Henri III* is altogether passionate ; the Duke de Guise suspects that his wife is loved by Saint-Mégrin, one of the young noblemen in the suite of Henri III. He compels the duchess to send a letter to Saint-Mégrin appointing an hour and place. The young man comes, and the Duke de Guise has him murdered by his people. However superficially Dumas has portrayed the love of Saint-Mégrin and the jealousy of Guise, he has nevertheless founded

(1) Read an account of this interview and reading in vol. I of the *Théâtre complet* of Alex. Dumas: *Comment je suis devenu auteur dramatique.*

his play on a conflict of passions, and we receive the impression that such events might have happened and did happen as he depicts them. He places his action in an historical framework formed by a more amusing than exact portrayal of the court of Henri III, and the conflict between the king and Balafre at the time when the latter organised the Ligue; and it required a very sure and very expert hand not to confound the passionate motive with the historical, and to condition one by the other (1). It was after the success of *Henri III* that seven dramatic authors, whose names should go down to posterity (Arnault, Lemercier, Viennet, Jouy, Andrieux, Jay and O. Leroy), addressed a petition to King Charles X against the invasion of the Théâtre-Français by melodrama. The king's reply was: "Je n'ai, comme tous les Français, qu'une place au parterre."

*Christine* was played at the Odéon in 1830. At the same theatre Dumas made another experiment in verse: *Charles VII chez ses grands vassaux* (1831), an historical tragedy containing a fine situation but of weak execution. He inclined more and more towards melodrama. However remarkable the skill which he displayed in *Richard d'Arlington* (1831), *La Tour de Nesle* (1832), *Kean* (1836), etc., it cannot be denied that these works, by their too summary psychology and their lack of style, belong to the domain of melodrama. But all of them have a merit—namely, movement. The characters do not analyse their motives for our benefit, but they act, and it is only upon second thoughts that we feel the improbability of their adventures.

We shall deal further on with the comedies of Dumas (2).

## V. — THE PLAYS OF ALFRED DE VIGNY.

Alfred de Vigny, one of the greatest French romanticist lyric poets, also ranks with the dramatists. His first claim on our gratitude lies in having made a complete translation of *Othello* for the Théâtre-Français in 1829. This translation is rather heavy, but it is honest, and seemed a surprising novelty to spectators used to the adaptations by Ducis (3). It is true that Ducis' work was acted by Talma until 1824, that Talma had lived in London and seen Shakespeare's plays acted there, and that he restored to the roles some of the truth and poetry which Ducis had left out. The public, which had enthusiastically welcomed the English actors in 1827-28, also welcomed Vigny's work; but his version had only sixteen representations, while Ducis' *Othello* held its place in the repertory until 1850.—Before *Othello*, Vigny had translated *The Merchant of Venice*, but it was not acted.

The success of *Hernani* and *Henri III* turned Vigny's attention to historical

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1016.

(2) Cf. p. 850.

(3) Ducis had produced, from 1769-1792 *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Roméo*, *Le roi Lear* and *Macbeth*.

drama, and he produced at the Odéon, in 1831, *La Maréchale d'Ancre*. This would have been nothing more than an episode divided into scenes, after the manner of *Les Barricades* and the *Etats de Blois* of Vitet (1), if the author had not introduced a few original characters and a love intrigue. The basic idea of the play is that Concini, Maréchal d'Ancre, is pursued not only by political enemies who have long been dominated by the genius of his wife, but also by the personal hatred of a Corsican nobleman, Borgia, a former lover of Eléonora Galigaï, now the wife of the marshal. This Borgia, who has married Isabelle Monti, discovers that Concini is courting his wife. So there is a double rivalry between these two men, which results, in the fifth act, in a moonlight duel, which is assuredly the finest scene in the work (2). All the historical portion of the play, conscientiously handled, and full of details, in the style of *Henri III*, is somewhat cold, and the play as a whole is tiresome. It had only a *succès d'estime*.

*Chatterton* met with much more lasting success. It was acted at the Théâtre-Français on February 12, 1835, ran through forty-two representations and was frequently revived. The sympathy which the public then showed, and has since retained for this work, is due no doubt in part to cleanly-cut characters, well-conducted action and a tragic denouement; but it is especially due, perhaps, to the profundity, discretion, concentration—classic in the best sense of the word—in this play, which is at the same time altogether psychological and impassioned.—*Chatterton* was taken by Vigny from his novel *Stello*, which appeared in 1832. It is the story of a young and unknown poet, ill, and living with an avaricious and hard-natured manufacturer named John Bell. He is pitied only by a Quaker who lives in the house, and by Kitty Bell, John's wife, who prudently succours Chatterton, avoiding conversation with him because his presence makes her heart beat faster. An unconscious and fatal love, so powerful in spite of its muteness that it unites them in death—takes possession of these two hearts; and it is the expression of this resisted, renounced love, betraying itself in actions, in intonations, in awkwardness, which lifts this drama to the level of a tragedy by Racine. The denouement is terrible in its simplicity. Chatterton poisons himself, and Kitty Bell, to whom he has confessed his love, dies of the emotion caused by his death without uttering a word. It was in the exquisite role of Kitty Bell that Marie Dorval achieved her greatest triumph. We must avow that one part of this play, the part to which Vigny attached the greatest importance—namely, the thesis that society is guilty of not recognising and supporting genius—is outworn. It was for this thesis that Vigny wrote *Chatterton*, but it is the love story which has kept the play alive.

(1) LOUIS VITET (1802-1873), one of the most distinguished critics on the *Globe* newspaper, introduced, from 1827 to 1829, some *Scènes historiques* (*Les Barricades*, *les États de Blois*, *La Mort de Henri III*), which must be taken account of in the history of romantic drama. After 1830, he was one of the most intelligent members of the *Commission des Monuments historiques*.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1040.





BARBERINE

*From a water-colour by Eugène Lami (1800-1890) engraved by A. Lalauze.  
The last scene: Return of Count Ulric to his wife.*



## VI. — ALFRED DE MUSSET.

It is difficult to know in what category to place the plays of Alfred de Musset. The poet did not write them for the stage, and they do not belong to any special genre. We speak of them in this chapter, because the principal ones represent the most complete and most artistic realisation of the romanticist program.

Musset had been ambitious to write plays. On the 1st of December, 1831, the Odéon had produced his *La Nuit vénitienne*, a prose comedy in one act, which was hissed. Fortunate failure ! Musset, very much vexed, gave up writing for the stage, and gave his fancy free play in his dramatic essays. In 1832, he published, under the title of *Un Spectacle dans un fauteuil*, three essays : *Les Marrons du feu*, *La Coupe et les Lèvres* and *A quoi rêvent les jeunes filles*. In 1833, during a visit to Venice, he wrote *Lorenzaccio*, a play which is admirable for its intensity and clear-cut effect. It is the story of the murder of Alexandre de Médicis by his nephew Lorenzo, according to Varchi's chronicle.—Musset published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* all the other plays now collected under the general title of *Comédies et Proverbes*, of which the principal are : *Les Caprices de Marianne*, *André del Sarte*, *Fantasio*, *On ne badine pas avec l'amour*, *Il ne faut jurer de rien* ; and in the vein of fashionable society, *Un Caprice* and *Il faut qu'une porte soit ouverte ou fermée*.

If we seek the sources of these plays, we find Shakespeare, Byron, Racine, Marivaux, Aristophanes and Beaumarchais,—but, above all, Musset himself. It is interesting to disengage his originality. Musset wrote his plays without dreaming that, on a stage made of wood and painted canvas, actors must address a public. No tradition, or convention or practical necessity restrict him : he sees, he feels, he imagines, and writes down what has ravished his eyes or his heart. His characters are as varied as in life ; he has no need to subordinate their diversity to any predominating character ; they are clear-cut, and differ decidedly from one another. Octave and Fortunio are poetical and charming, Blasius and Bridaine as stupid as one could wish. All Musset's characters, like Shakespeare's, are individual and alive. And what can we say of this most spontaneous, most vivid, comical or eloquent, coquettish or impassioned of styles ?

It was a great surprise when an actress, Mme Allan, returning from Petrograd where it had occurred to her to play *Un Caprice*, acted it again at the Comédie-Française in 1847. The success she achieved led Musset to give all the other plays to this same theatre. Some retouching and revision was doubtless necessary ; but, on the whole, these were genuine plays, and they proved that genius can do without craftsmanship, or at least suggest to the

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1045.

poet by intuition what others only learn by practice. But this example is unique in the history of French drama.

## VII. — CASIMIR DELAVIGNE.

Without speaking here of Delavigne as a lyrical poet, whom the best critics of the period at one time ranked with Lamartine and Hugo, let us consider only his dramatic success, which must always be included in the history of the romanticist drama because he represents a sort of compromise between tragedy and drama.—His first debut was a triumph: *Les Vêpres siciliennes* (1819, Odéon). This modern subject, treated in the style of Voltaire, offered some fine situations which the author knew how to handle. The fourth act was enthusiastically applauded during the entire entr'acte; and this act promised more than Delavigne was able to fulfill. After the production of *Les Comédiens* at the Odéon in 1820, Delavigne gave the Théâtre-Français his *Le Paria* (1824), in which there were political allusions. This play, classic in its style and in the use of choruses, might be called romanticist in its thesis, but should rather be connected with the philosophical tragedies of Voltaire.



CASIMIR DELAVIGNE

From his portrait by Ary Scheffer  
(1795-1858)  
lithographed by Alophe.

Delavigne produced the following comedies: *L'École des vieillards* (1823) and *La Princesse Aurélie* (1828); and then a long drama in verse, *Marino Faliero* (1829). This was truly romanticist, in subject, in its imi-

tation of Byron, in the variety of scenery, the presence of crowds, etc. If it were better written, *Marino Faliero* would be really a fine play. As it appeared between *Henri III* and *Hernani*, it has a relative interest for the historian.—Delavigne had two more great successes: *Louis XI* (1832) and *Les Enfants d'Édouard* (1833). In both these plays he attempted an imitation of Shakespeare. He borrowed from him, for his *Louis XI*, the scene in which the dying king sees the Dauphin trying on the crown; and the *Enfants d'Édouard* are a fusion of *Henry VI* and *Richard III*.—The parts of *Louis XI*, of *Doctor Coitier*, and of *Richard* contain a few fine speeches; and the scene between *Tyrrel* and *Richard* is rather good.—We should not carry our admiration of distinction so far as to scorn Casimir Delavigne. It is true that he had not the merits of his defects. His incontestable dramatic power is not sufficiently original to excuse the weakness of his

style, and he fell on troublous literary times, and was neither a decided classicist nor a daring romanticist. But the fact that he could hold his own in competition with Hugo and Dumas, and that his works have not completely disappeared from the theatrical repertory (since *Louis XI* and *Les Enfants d'Édouard* are still played), suffices to prove that he is not one of those mediocre authors who should not be allowed to encumber literary history.

### VIII. — THE CLASSICAL REACTION. — PONSARD.

The director of the Odéon had accepted, in December, 1842, a tragedy entitled *Lucrèce*, the author of which was **François Ponsard**. Inclining at first to romanticism (he had published a translation of Byron's *Manfred*), Ponsard had attended a series of plays in Lyons in the year 1840, in which the celebrated actress Rachel was the "star" (1); and classical beauty being revealed to him, he wrote his *Lucrèce*. The Théâtre-Français had produced Hugo's *Les Burgraves* on March 7, 1843, without much success; and on April 22 of the same year, *Lucrèce* achieved a triumph at the Odéon. At that time, especially at the Odéon, many tragedies were given; and the public which patronised this theatre, formed largely of students, damned them mercilessly. *Lucrèce*, then must have been truly superior to plays like *Philippe III* and *Arbogaste*, which in 1840 and 1841 might have also taken advantage of this craving after a reaction. *Lucrèce*, in fact, is a substantial and naïve play, written in a dull style, but frank and healthy. The author neither weakened nor ornamented his subject; nor did he overlay it with any false picturesqueness. He dared to present to the public, not imperial Rome in gorgeous costumes, but primitive Rome in plain woollen togas. — Ponsard was less successful in 1846 with his *Agnès de Méranie*, which is superior, however, to *Lucrèce* in psychology and style. But the situation of Agnes, second wife of Philippe-Auguste, whom Pope Innocent III insists on being sent back to her family, is monotonous. — Ponsard then changed his manner. Lamartine's success with the *Girondins* inspired his *Charlotte Corday*, a fine historic drama in verse. In 1853 he achieved another triumph similar to that of *Lucrèce* with a comedy in verse called *L'Honneur et l'Argent*; and in 1856, *La Bourse* was equally applauded. He wrote another historic drama entitled *Le Lion amoureux* (the action of which passes during the Directory), and which in 1866 had one hundred and twenty consecutive representations, a very exceptional number for that time. Ponsard, who owed his celebrity to a Roman tragedy, only

(1) The history of drama in the nineteenth century should preserve the name of *Rachel* (1821-1858), an actress who made her debut at the Comédie-Française in 1838, and who, at a time when the classical repertory had fallen into a sort of disrepute, and was abandoned to substitutes since the death of Talma in 1824, renewed with genius the interpretation of the great feminine roles of Corneille, Racine and Voltaire. Concerning Rachel read the feuilletons by TH. GAUJER (*Histoire de la littérature dramatique*, 6 vols., 1858) and J. JANIN'S *Rachel et la Tragédie* (Paris, 1859).

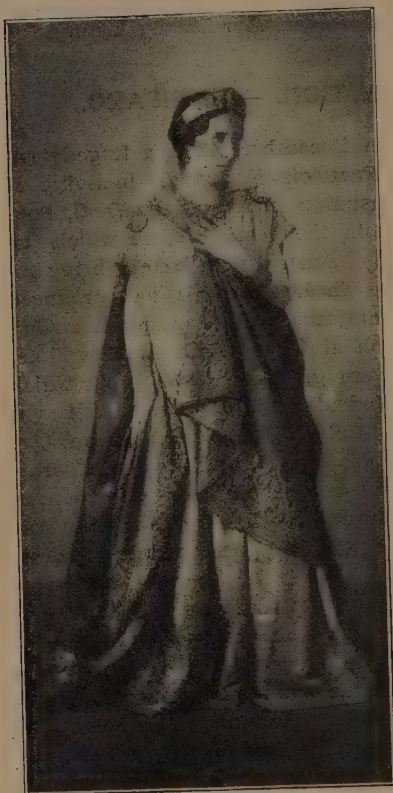
returned once more to antiquity with his *Ulysse* (1852), a somewhat dry piece. Before his death his *Galilée* was played in 1867 : its fine verses are more philosophical than dramatic (1).

Ponsard's work is still esteemed, not his *Lucrèce* which everybody has forgotten, but his *L'Honneur et L'Argent*, a frequently revived comedy, and two historical dramas, *Charlotte Corday* and *Le Lion amoureux* (revived in 1887). He did not found a school of tragedy. The tragedies which followed *Lucrèce* : *La Virginie* (1844) and *Le Vieux de la Montagne* (1847) by Latour de Saint-Ybars, and *Le Vieux Consul* (1844) and *Les Atrides* (1847) by Arthur Pouroy, were the flattest failures. Even Rachel could not win success at the Théâtre-Français for a single one of the new tragedies.

Ponsard, therefore, is more especially a precursor of the bourgeois comedy of Émile Augier, the Augier who wrote *Gabrielle* and *La Contagion*. Tragedy was revived, no doubt, but it was the tragedies of Corneille and Racine that were given. Voltaire himself had been drowned in the romanticist tempest.

## IX. — THE RENAISSANCE OF VERSIFIED DRAMA.

We have just seen that two of Ponsard's greatest successes were historical plays in verse. This genre was thoroughly acclimated in France. But very few versified plays were acted under the Second Empire, during the almost absolute triumph of the realist genre as represented by Augier and



THE RACHEL  
In rôle of *Valéria*,  
from a lithograph.

Dumas fils. It was after 1870 that the real renaissance of the poetic play occurred.

**HENRI DE BORNIER** (1825-1904) produced in 1875 at the Théâtre-Français *La Fille de Roland*, a play which still remains in the repertory, and

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1055



despite the dullness of its style, is the most *Cornélienne* of modern works.

Bornier supposes that the traitor, Ganelon, has escaped the punishment to which he had been condemned by Charlemagne, and is living on his estate under the name of Amaury. His son, Gérard, a young and brave knight, rescues Berthe, the daughter of Roland. Gérard and Berthe love each other; but the son of Ganelon cannot marry the daughter of Roland, and Gérard voluntarily renounces his love.

In 1883 he published *L'Apôtre* (Saint Paul), which was rejected by the Théâtre-Français; in 1885 he achieved only a partial success with his *Les Noces d'Attila* at the Odéon; finally, in 1888 his *Mahomet*, accepted in the rue de Richelieu, was forbidden by the censor as the result of a protest from the Turkish ambassador to the government. (Cf. Beaumarchais, Monologue of Figaro) (1).

**FRANÇOIS COPPÉE** (1842-1908) produced in 1881 *Les Jacobites*, and in 1883 *Severo Torelli*, both achieving great success; but his best work is *Pour la Couronne*, which, by the power of its action, the beauty of the characters and the brilliance of the versification is superior to *La Fille de Roland*.

**M. JEAN RICHEPIN** (born in 1849) is the author of *Nana-Sahib* (1883), a Hindoo drama, full of brilliant local colour, and of *Par le Glaive* (1892). In versified comedy he retains his picturesque and vigorous style, with more naturalism; his best work is certainly *Le Chemineau* (1897).

We may mention also *Grisélidis* by A. Silvestre and Morand (1891), *La Reine Fiamente* by Catulle Mendès (1894). So we come to Edmond Rostand, who benefited by all the preceding movement; but we shall revert to this in the chapter on Comedy.

#### Conclusion.

Romantic drama, begun in 1827 with *Cromwell*, continued until 1843, the date of *Les Burgraves*. After an eclipse due to the weariness of the public, which had turned toward the common-sense school, it was revived with the representation of Musset's plays. Then, after 1870, a sort of renaissance set in with the plays by Bornier, Coppée and Richepin.

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(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 591; 2nd cycle, p. 1060.



THE CHRIST OF THE LAST JUDGMENT  
Frieze taken from the *Génie du Christianisme*.

## CHAPTER VI.

# THE RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT.

### SUMMARY

1° Among the **RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL WRITERS** who represent the reaction against the eighteenth century are **JOSEPH DE MAISTRE**, with his views on the action of Providence (*Soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, 1821); **DE BONALD**, **BALLANCHE**, **LAMENNAIS**, who defended the church in his *Essai sur l'Indifférence* and his journal *L'Avenir*, and separated from it in his *Les Paroles d'un croyant*.

2° The most illustrious **PREACHERS** were **LACORDAIRE**, who preached from 1835 to 1851 in Notre-Dame, and gave his sermons the form of *lectures*: he owed his success to the timeliness of his arguments and the romanticism of his style; **RAVIGNAN**, who was more methodical; and **MONSEIGNEUR DUPANLOUP**, chiefly distinguished by his works on moral education.

3° IN **PHILOSOPHY**, **MAINE DE BIRAN** represented the return to metaphysics and psychology; **ROYER-COLLARD** introduced into France the Scottish doctrine of T. Reid; **V. COUSIN** commanded a wide influence, and had numerous disciples; he was eclectic, and attached great importance to the history of philosophy; among his disciples were **JOUFFROY** and **JULES SIMON**.—**SAINT-SIMON** and **FOURIER** represented socialistic philosophy, and **AUGUSTE COMTE** positivist philosophy.



DECORATED LETTER  
by Grandville (1803-1847)

THE nineteenth century inherited the philosophical doctrines of the eighteenth. But, to a certain degree, the Revolution had furnished it with the conclusion, the fact, the experience which the Encyclopedists had lacked. The seductive thesis of progress itself and the Golden Age of To-Morrow had been modified by events. The theories of the eighteenth century passed, in part, into the domain of reality: Montesquieu's politics, Voltaire's tolerance and Jean-Jacques' socialism were incorporated in laws or in manners. Finally, the anti-philosophical party, which had been almost powerless in the eighteenth century, was revived, and with apologists like Chateaubriand, polemics like Joseph de Maistre, and preachers like Lacordaire, waged war with philosophy under less unequal conditions. We will understand the literary importance of this group of thinkers and polemics when we remember that most of these religious and philosophical writers expressed their ideas or attacked their adversaries in a style which was vigorous, figurative and eloquent,—wrote, in short, as disciples of Chateaubriand, and contemporaries of Lamartine and Hugo.

## I. — RELIGIOUS WRITERS.

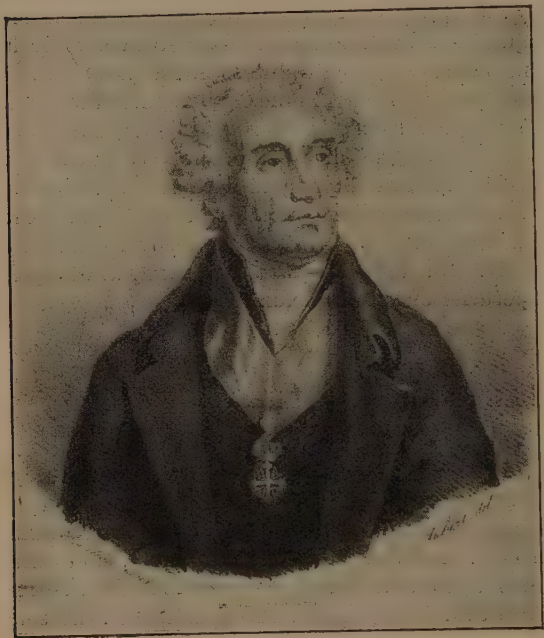
**JOSEPH DE MAISTRE** (1751-1821).—Maistre was born at Chambéry. His father was president of the Senate of Savoy, and brought up his son in the most rigorous manner. Joseph himself was a member of this Senate until France's conquest of Savoy in 1792. After a short stay in Turin, and then in Geneva and Lausanne, he was appointed regent of the *Grande Chancellerie* in Sardinia, in 1799. He remained for four years on this island, then the sole possession of the house of Savoy to which he was loyal. King Victor-Emmanuel appointed him, in 1803, minister plenipotentiary to Russia, and Joseph de Maistre lived for fourteen years in Petrograd, far from his wife and two daughters. His son Rodolphe joined him in Russia to take service in the Russian army, and fought valiantly against Napoleon's armies. It was during this exile that Joseph de Maistre wrote his principal works, in spite of the difficulties of his situation, and his sorrows. When he returned to Turin in 1817, his health was broken, and he died in 1821.

Although de Maistre's ideas, both in politics and religion, were too absolute, his personal character can only excite the liveliest sympathy. He fought nobly against poverty, endured for fourteen years the separation from a family he adored, a prey to the annoying interference of a king who appreciated neither his dignity nor his merit, but to whom, however, he remained heroic-

ally loyal. His letters are as playful and tender as his books are authoritative and biting (1).

Joseph de Maistre has left us : *Les Considérations sur la France* (1796) (2), *L'essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques* (1810-1814), *Du Pape* (1819) (3), *L'Église gallicane* (1821), *Les Soirées de Saint-Petersbourg* (1821). All these works might properly bear the same sub-title as the last, namely,

*Entretiens sur le gouvernement temporel de la Providence*. J. de Maistre, in fact, strives to demonstrate that nothing happens in the world except by the will of God; that the French Revolution, for example, had a fatal and divine character; that France, after a period of anarchy, must take an absolute master; and that the true chief for her must be a Christian king. His plea in favour of Providence is developed with admirable vigour in *Les Soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*; it is here that, taking up again the dogma of original sin which weighs upon all the descendants of the first man, he explains, by the need for expiation, the bloody sacrifices of war and the survival of the penalty of death among all civilized nations.



JOSEPH DE MAISTRE

From the original painting by Bouillon, lithographed by Aubert.

War he considers divine : without the mysterious will of Providence, how would it be possible? "... Do you hear the earth crying out and demanding blood?" Nothing is more famous than these pages on war, with their sublime horror (7th *enfrelien*) (4) and on the executioner (1st *entretien*) (5).

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 449; 2nd cycle, p. 1079.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1072.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 416.

(4) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1076.

(5) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1074.



Among de Maistre's paradoxes, we must point out his diatribe against the Jansenists and Bossuet in *L'Église gallicane*; his apology for the Inquisition in his *Lettre à un gentilhomme russe*; and among his most curious predictions, that of the Restoration in his *Considérations* (1796) (1).

However profound and suggestive de Maistre's ideas are, they would never have been authoritative were it not for the style in which he has clothed them. This native of Savoy is a purely French writer, comparable, in his best pages, to Pascal and Bossuet. Like seventeenth century masters, his work is devoted to spiritual man, to ideas and to metaphysics. His preoccupation is to reason closely, and to find the true, precise and vigorous expression for his thought. His metaphors are involuntary, and often biblical like Bossuet's, because like him he was "nourished on the marrow of lions." But he pays little attention to the external world; and the description of a night on the Neva, at the beginning of the *Soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, was probably written by his brother Xavier.

**DE BONALD** (1754-1840), was counsellor to the University under the Empire; under the Restoration, he was a deputy and a peer. His chief works are: *La Théorie du pouvoir politique et religieux dans la société civile* (1796) and *La Législation primitive* (1802). Bonald has expressed in abstract formulas the theory of a "divine human society," that is to say, a society organised by God Himself, and developing, like a living being, according to immutable laws. The head of the State, father of this great family, is only the representative of the Deity and the interpreter of His will; the individual has no right, but must remain in the place assigned him by the governing power.

**BALLANCHE** (1776-1847) was a friend of Joubert and Chateaubriand, and a faithful habitué of Mme Récamier's salon at the Abbaye-au-Bois. He is distinguished by his very vague and very noble conception of social philosophy. In his *Palingénésie* (1827), he predicts the coming renovation of humanity. He often makes use of grandiose symbols, and his style has rare harmony and poetry.

**LAMENNAIS** (1782-1854).—Félicité-Robert de Lamennais was born at Saint-Malo, Chateaubriand's native town. Left an orphan at an early age, he was brought up by an uncle in the château of La Chesnaie, near Dinan, where like the author of *René* at Combourg, he lived amidst nature. As a child he was already a rebel, with an imagination set ablaze by his precocious reading; and his first communion had to be delayed. Under the influence of his brother, who had already taken holy orders, he became a priest at the age of

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1072.

thirty-four. He had already published, in 1808, *Réflexions sur l'état de l'Église*, in which he discussed the Concordat so animatedly that the imperial police suppressed the work. In 1817 he produced the first volume of *L'Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion*, which, in its own genre, made as profound a sensation as *Le Génie du Christianisme*. The solemn energy with which Lamennais attacked the deism of the eighteenth century and Protestantism, showed him to be one of those impassioned and extreme advocates who are sometimes less formidable for their adversaries than for the cause they themselves defend (1). This was still more evident in 1821, when he published the second volume of *L'Indifférence* and the *Défense* of the first two volumes. The clergy and Rome became anxious. But at the same time, a number of young Catholics, fascinated by liberalism and poetry, gathered at La Chesnaie around Lamennais: these were Montalembert, Lacordaire, Abbé Gerbet, Maurice de Guérin.—In 1830, Lamennais founded the journal *L'Avenir*, the motto of which was “*Dieu et Liberté*.” This journal at first received with great favour by the Catholic party, was soon condemned by Rome. Lacordaire and Montalembert then separated themselves from Lamennais, and the latter at first submitted (1832); but the publication of the *Paroles d'un croyant* (1834) brought about the final rupture with the Church. In *Les Affaires de Rome* (1836) Lamennais offered his defence.—After this, he devoted all his strength and talent to an open defence of the political and religious doctrines which caused his condemnation: *Le Livre du Peuple* (1837), *L'Esquisse d'une philosophie* (1841), etc. He was deputy to the National Assembly in 1848.

Lamennais must first be considered as a religious philosopher who endeavours to find a new demonstration of Christianity and Catholicism. Let us briefly recall that he bases certainly upon the universal consent of mankind, and that upon this criterion he establishes the truth of the religious idea, of Christianity and of Catholicism. But this kind of apologetics leads him to another principle, which is more and more apparent in his writings to the point of making him suspect by the Church and heretical, that is to say, the principle of Christian socialism, which ceases to be orthodox when it rejects tradition and authority. Lamennais' theories, therefore, retain a part of their interest; his *Affaires de Rome*, his *Esquisse d'une philosophie*, his *Correspondance* touch upon many points which are still interesting.

Lamennais is, on the other hand, a great writer, with a style both oratorical and poetical... He drew from Biblical sources, and, after Bossuet, he is one of those who have reconstituted and most deeply felt the incomparable poetry of Holy Scripture. In his *Les Paroles d'un croyant*, he achieves extraordinary effects of terror, mystery, emotion and tenderness. Let us note especially chapter VII, on solidarity (*Lorsqu'un arbre est seul, il est battu des vents...* (2);

(1) *Morceaux choisis* 2nd cycle, p. 1085.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 535.

IX, on poverty (*Vous êtes dans ce monde comme des étrangers...*); XIII, on impiety (*C'était dans une nuit sombre; un ciel sans astres pesait sur la terre, comme un couvercle de marbre noir sur un tombeau...*); XVIII, on charity (*Deux hommes étaient voisins...*) in which the tone of the gospel parable is used with singular success (1); XXIII, a kind of litany of anguish and misery, the refrain of which is : *Nous crions vers vous, Seigneur...*; XXV (*C'était une nuit d'hiver. Le vent soufflait au dehors et blanchissait les toits. Sous un de ces toits, dans une chambre étroite étaient assises, travaillant de leurs mains, une femme à cheveux blancs et une jeune fille...*); XLI, *L'Exilé* (2). This book is a sequence of images and visions, of movements and rhythms, which more than once give the sensation of the finest and strangest poetry.

## II. — PREACHERS.

Under the Empire and the Restoration, pulpit orators were numerous. The best preachers are often those who have left behind no written discourses. A few, and they must not necessarily be supposed guilty of literary vanity, hold a rank in the history of French literature; their superior talent was brought to light by circumstances, the place in which they found themselves, and their audiences.

Such was the case, for instance, with Abbé de **FRAYSSINOUS** (1765-1841), who inaugurated the genre of *conférences*, in which later on Lacordaire, Ravignan and their successors were to become illustrious. These lectures he gave in the church of Saint-Sulpice, in Paris, at first from 1803 to 1809, then in 1814, and from 1816 to 1822. According to his contemporaries, they had great success, by their timeliness (they placed religious questions on about the same ground as that chosen by Chateaubriand), and by their elegance and clarity. Frayssinous published a part of them in 1825 under the title, *Défense du Christianisme*. To-day they strike us as somewhat cold and affected. From 1823 to 1828 Frayssinous was head-master of the University.

**LACORDAIRE** (1802-1861). — Henri Lacordaire was first a member of the Paris bar. A deist, like Rousseau, rather than a Christian, he underwent a religious crisis at the age of twenty-two, which resulted, through his reason rather than his sentiment, in his complete conversion. He entered the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice in 1824. The boldness of his thoughts at first astonished his directors. In 1827 he was ordained priest, became chaplain of the Visitation, and then of the Collège Henri-IV. It is said that he was preparing to sail for America, when he was persuaded to stay by Lamennais, who was then

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1088.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1090.

founding *L'Avenir*. For this journal, to which he passionately devoted his labour, Lacordaire wrote a great many articles; but as soon as the decision of Rome was known, he submitted, and broke off relations with the imperious

and fascinating master, who had always rather frightened him.

He had preached his first sermon at Saint-Roch in 1833, without making any sensation. In the following year he achieved the greatest success with his lectures at the Collège Stanislas; but this success brought suspicion upon him and the lectures were suspended. In 1835 and 1836 he preached the Lenten sermons at Notre-Dame; and after that set out for Rome to obtain authorisation for re-establishing in France the Order of the Dominicans, or Preachers. He reappeared in the pulpit of Notre-Dame de Paris in 1841, in his monk's robe, and was first commissioned to preach the Advent sermons (while Father de Ravignan preached the Lenten discourses in the same pulpit); and from 1848 to 1851 he resumed his Lenten lectures. In 1847, he pronounced the



LACORDAIRE IN 1841

From a portrait painted by Théodore Chassériau (1849-1856).

funeral oration of General Drouot (1). In 1848, he had been appointed deputy to the National Assembly, but soon resigned. After a series of conferences at Toulouse in 1854, he devoted himself entirely to education as head-master of the Sorèze school, in the Tarp. He gave up all idea of any further triumphs as a public speaker. He wrote his *Lettres à un jeune homme sur la vie chrétienne*

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 538; 2nd cycle, p. 1093.



(1857), and his *Vie de Sainte Marie-Madeleine* (1860). In 1861, he entered the French Academy, succeeding Tocqueville, and was received by Guizot. He died in the same year, at Sorèze.

Lacordaire's *Conférences*, seventy-three in number, expose Christian truths in accordance with a plan which is, properly speaking, neither logical nor dogmatic. The preacher's originality (and this was the reason for his success with French youth between the year 1833 and 1851), consisted in following in a way the evolution of a soul which, through sincere doubt, finally reaches faith. As has been very truly said (1), it is the history of his own soul and his conversion which formed the plan of his argument. So, though to-day Lacordaire's style seems to us too oratorical, even in the unfavourable sense of the word, yet it is touchingly sincere. He gave to his audience the proofs which had been and were still sufficient for him, and these proofs had an undoubted merit, namely their timeliness; they constantly brought back those of his hearers who were honest, though still tormented by doubt, to the social and human value of Christianity; they carried on, with more authority, the work of Chateaubriand; and the evolution of Christianity has shown that these arguments, taken out of their old-fashioned setting, still possess some value (2).

Lacordaire's *Conférences* have such a wide scope that the orator could easily introduce political and historical digressions into them. Their tone is very variegated, ranging from simple and familiar talk to romantic lyricism; while the voice and gestures of the orator added unforgettable prestige to his eloquence. But Lacordaire's example was difficult to follow, and though the Dominican Order has included a few illustrious preachers, such as Father *Didon* and Father *Monsabré*, there were many others who were merely mediocre imitators of the master.

**OTHER PREACHERS.** — Parallel with the romanticist eloquence of Lacordaire, was that of Father *de Ravignan*. He was a Jesuit who appeared to have developed himself by a study of Bourdaloue and Frayssinous. His vocation, like Lacordaire's, came late. He was born in 1795, and began his career as a magistrate. He was a substitute at Paris when, in 1822, he entered Saint-Sulpice, and went later to the Jesuits. He preached the Lenten sermons at Notre-Dame from 1837 to 1846, and from 1849 to 1857. His manner was more simple, smooth and distinguished than Lacordaire's; but, in the reading, more of his eloquence is lost.

*Mgr Dupanloup* (1802-1878), Bishop of Orléans, distinguished himself as preacher and political orator. He combined the vehemence of an apostle with the delicacy of expression of a perfect humanist. His fame will rest chiefly

(1) Cf. d'HAUSSONVILLE, *Lacordaire*, and A. CAHEN, *Histoire de la Littérature française* (Julléville, Colin), vol. VII, p. 576.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1094.

on his works on pedagogy, the ideas of which may be open to discussion, but which evince as much experience as they do generous intention: *De L'Education* (3 vol., 1851), *La Femme studieuse* (1863), *Lettres sur l'éducation des filles* (1879).

The Protestant Church also possessed a number of excellent preachers, among whom may be mentioned: **Athanase Coquerel** (1795-1868), who first preached

in Amsterdam, and then, from 1832 until his death, in Paris. His sermons, remarkable for their moral elevation and unction, have been published in eight volumes (1819-1852). — **Adolphe Monod** (1802-1856) is more vehement. He combines with his logical reasoning a wholly Biblical imagination. His sermons fill four volumes (1856).



L'ANTICLERICALISM IN THE STREET IN 1831

This lithograph represents "the procession of Shrove Tuesday" which followed the pillage of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois and of the Archbishop by the "liberal" citizens early in the reign of Louis-Philippe.

representatives of Condillac and Condorcet are: **Destutt de Tracy** (1754-1836, *Eléments d'idéologie*); **Laromiguière** (1756-1837), professor at the Sorbonne in 1811 and 1812, whose *Leçons de philosophie* were, until V. Cousin's, the basis of teaching in the lycées and colleges. **Cabanis** (1757-1808), a physician, who developed Condillac's sensualism to the point of materialism in his *Traité du physique et du moral de l'homme* (1802). **Lamarck** (1744-1829), in his *Philosophie zoologique* (1809), was the originator of the theory of *transformisme*, taken up again by Darwin.

The reaction began with **Maine de Biran** (1766-1824), who gathered around him disciples and friends like Ampère, Cuvier, Royer-Collard, Cousin, and

### III.

### PHILOSOPHERS.

Under the first Empire, philosophy was still near to the eighteenth century. The most illustrious rep-

Guizot, and was the expander of new methods in metaphysics and psychology. "He is the master of all of us," said Royer-Collard. **Royer-Collard** (1763-1845), while a professor at the Sorbonne from 1811-1814, adopted and taught the Scottish philosophy of Th. Reid, and continued the work of Maine de Biran. He was early absorbed in politics, but he left pupils like Cousin, Jouffroy and Damiron.

**VICTOR COUSIN** (1792-1867). — A student at the Ecole Normale in 1810, and *maitre de conférences* there in 1812 and 1813, Cousin entered the Sorbonne in 1815 as substitute for Royer-Collard. He taught there with brilliant success until 1820. To Maine de Biran's metaphysics and the Scottish philosophy imported by Royer-Collard, he added his knowledge of German philosophy. His classes were suspended in 1820. Cousin then applied himself to various editions and translations (Descartes, Plato), and travelled in Germany, where he was arrested as a suspicious person and imprisoned for six months. In 1828 he was again allowed free speech, and his course at the Sorbonne again attracted hearers and enthusiastic disciples. After 1830, like his illustrious colleagues, Villemain and Guizot, he was tempted away from teaching by politics. He became director of the Ecole Normale, a peer and Minister; and he tried to organise and discipline the teaching of philosophy in the University. Like most of those whom the events of 1830 had drawn into politics, the *coup d'État* of 1851 sent him back into private life. In Cousin's case, this was a fruitful retreat, as he then wrote his studies of celebrated women of the seventeenth century.

His principal works are: *Cours de Philosophie et d'Histoire de la Philosophie* (published in 1836, 1840 and 1841), etc., *Du Vrai, du Beau et du Bien* (1846, recast in 1853) (1); *Jacqueline Pascal* (1844); *Mme de Longueville* (1852) (2); *Mme de Sablé* (1854); *Mme de Chevreuse* (1855); *Mlle de Hautefort* (1855); *La Société française au dix-septième siècle d'après le Grand Cyrus* (1858).

As a philosopher, Cousin was first inspired by Kant and Hegel; he wished to base his system on metaphysics. Later he admitted that each system of philosophy possesses some truth, and he borrowed from each one such parts as could be coordinated; by this method he achieved *éclectisme* (choice), a doctrine aiming at an ingenious synthesis of everything that is best in all ancient and modern systems. Cousin thus created a French philosophy, spiritualistic, tolerant, rather vague, which was suited to educational methods and to the general public. He was led by his method itself to give much importance to the history of philosophy; and this resulted among his successors, who cannot all be called his disciples, in a useful curiosity in the development of doctrines as considered in their own milieu and at their own time.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 541; 2nd cycle, p. 1100.  
(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1103.

A few like Villemain have twitted him, and still do so, with having been too eloquent and a too copious writer. Perhaps he yielded too much to his taste for amplification ; but his influence, good in its time, arose largely from his oratorical power. His literary studies of the seventeenth century, have preserved all their value.

**JOUFFROY** (1796-1842) was one of Cousin's most brilliant disciples. In 1828 he was appointed professor in the *Faculté des Lettres*, in 1830, *maître de conférences* at the *Ecole Normale*, and in 1832, professor in the *Collège de France*. In addition to his lectures, which were vigorous and elegant in form, he published numerous articles, especially in the *Globe*, which he gathered later into his *Mélanges philosophiques* (1833), and of which we should particularly mention *Comment les dogmes finissent* and *La Grèce*. While a student at the *École Normale*, Jouffroy had undergone a crisis just contrary to that of Lacordaire : from faith, he had fallen into scepticism, and this change became a painful memory, as philosophy, in his case, never replaced the certainty he had lost. He became melancholy, and was almost the Musset of philosophy (1).

**JULES SIMON** (1814-1896), who was substitute for Cousin at the Sorbonne, reveals himself in his chief works (*Le Devoir*, *La Liberté de conscience*, *La Liberté civile*, etc.), as a moralist and spiritualist. He was early drawn into politics, to which he brought all the resources and subtleties of a mind both very supple and very honest.

With Cousin's school we may connect also, **Garnier** (1801-1864), Jouffroy's successor at the Sorbonne ; **Saisset** (1814-1863), professor at the *École Normale* and at the Sorbonne ; **Ravaisson** (1813-1900), celebrated for his works on Aristotle and on Greek archæology ; **Paul Janet** (1823-1899) professor at the Sorbonne, who rejuvenated the eclecticism of Cousin ; **E. Caro** (1826-1887), who taught brilliantly at the Sorbonne, and attracted the public by his broad-minded and polished lectures. Caro was perhaps a better critic (*La fin du dix-huitième siècle*, *George Sand*) than philosopher (*L'Idée de Dieu*, *Le Matérialisme et la Science*).

**The Socialistic Philosophers.** — **Saint-Simon** (1760-1825) is famous as the founder of a sort of sect, *Saint-Simonisme*, which attracted, at least momentarily, some very distinguished minds in love with the ideas of justice and social solidarity.

**Fourier** (1772-1837) invented, in his turn, a more popular form of socialism, founded on the community of goods. — **Proudhon** (1809-1865) is chiefly celebrated for his brochure entitled *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?* To this question the author replies : *La propriété, c'est le vol*.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1107.



**Positivism.** — **AUGUSTE COMTE** (1798-1857) represents the reaction against spiritualistic philosophy. In his *Cours de philosophie positive* (1842), he founded positivism, which must not be confounded with materialism or atheism. Comte invites the philosopher to leave metaphysics aside, as being the unknowable, and to apply himself to the study of phenomena and facts by means of experimental science; for him this is the only method by which we may set down, in a substantial and definite manner, those great problems whose premature solution we seek. With Comte we may connect **E. Littré** (1801-1881), one of the greatest philologists and scholars of modern times. He is especially known by his Dictionary; but we find his philosophy in his *La Science au point de vue philosophique* (1873), without counting a great number of important articles published in the *Revue de philosophie positive*.

Under the influence of Auguste Comte, **Taine** wrote in 1856 his *Philosophes au dix-neuvième siècle*, a work in which he attacked Cousin's eclecticism, and which caused a scandal at the time.

Among the philosophers may be ranked also **Ernest Renan**, whom we shall study in our chapter on historians, and who contributed above everything else to initiating the French into German doctrines.

As to those who represent the contemporary philosophical movement, we must limit ourselves to the mention of **Vacherot** (*Histoire critique de l'école d'Alexandrie*, (1846-1851), of **Renouvier** (*Essai de critique générale*, 4 vol., 1854-1861); **Father Gratry** (1805-1872) of the Oratory (*Les Sophistes et la Critique*, 1864); and the names of MM. Liard, Brochard, Boutroux, Bergson, etc., who by their works and their teaching maintain French philosophy in the first rank.

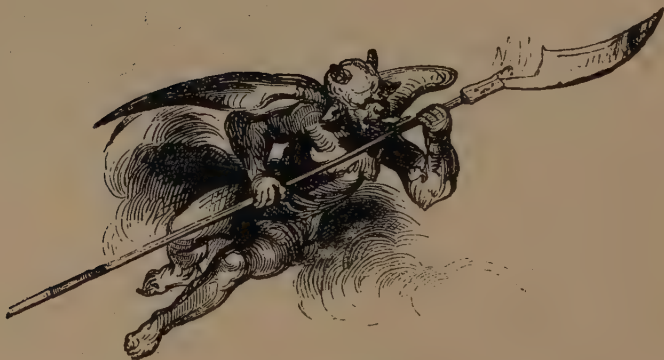


AUGUSTE COMTE

From the lithograph by Tony Foulion.

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PAGE ORNAMENT

Taken from the *Génie du Christianisme*.



FRIEZE TAKEN FROM A ROMANTICIST BOOK

## CHAPTER VII.

### CRITICISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

#### SUMMARY

1° There was a revival of **CRITICISM** in the nineteenth century, under the influence of Chateaubriand, Mme de Staël, the literary press, etc.

2° **VILLEMAIN**, in his lectures at the Sorbonne, from 1816 to 1830, inaugurated historical and comparative criticism.

3° The ambition of **SAINTE-BEUVE** was to write the "natural history" of minds. In *Les Lundis*, *Port-Royal*, *Les Portraits littéraires*, he excels in the definition and analysis of writers replaced in their own time.

4° **SAINT-MARC GIRARDIN** developed chiefly moral criticism; **NISARD** exclusively dealt with the seventeenth century, as having, alone, expressed "ideas in perfect language"; **TAINE** continued Sainte-Beuve systematically, considering literary works as the manifestation of a race at a certain moment and in a certain milieu; in dramatic criticism, **F. SARCEY** distinguished himself by judging plays from the exclusive point of view of theatrical art; **F. BRUNETIÈRE** attempted to apply science to criticism, and invented the theory of the evolution of genres; his manner in oratorical.

5° **AMONG CONTEMPORARIES**: **J. LEMAITRE** wrote his impressions which are always shrewd and based upon principles which are both æsthetic and moral; **E. FAGUET** excelled in reconstituting writers and thinkers by a process of analysis and synthesis.

6° **SCIENTIFIC WRITERS**: **CUVIER**, **AMPÈRE**, **ARAGO**, **CLAUDE BERNARD**, and **PASTEUR** were all remarkable for their sincerity and the naturalness with which they have expressed their ideas or sentiments.



GROTESQUE INITIAL  
of the XIX century.

**revival of Criticism in the Nineteenth Century.** — Under the influences which we have already indicated, in defining romanticism or in speaking of Chateaubriand and of Mme de Staël, criticism was renovated under the Restoration, at the same time with society. No other genre represents more completely, of its own nature, the many and diverse tendencies of any epoch. When one has read the works of the time, one must read the critics also in order to understand their relative significance. We have the deplorable habit of consulting these critics to find out "what we ought to think" of Chateaubriand, or Victor Hugo, Musset or George Sand; we seek "ready-made judgments". What we ought to consult them for is to ask them to teach us how contemporary society, that

is, the people, for whom they wrote, understood and admired or misunderstood these great minds, owing to merits then unperceived, or faults which at the time were considered merits. In short, we should study the critics in their own time and in their own milieu, not so much to "form our taste" as to exercise our own judgment.

It was in the literary press under the Restoration that modern criticism began and was developed, particularly in the journal called *Le Globe*, founded in 1824 by P. Dubois, which published strong and clear-sighted articles by a few men of distinguished though somewhat unsympathetic talent, who were soon absorbed in other work or in politics (1). Among the writers on the *Globe*, the young Sainte-Beuve alone achieved an eminent place in criticism. — Contemporary with the *Globe*, and following it, were a number of small literary journals (*La Minerve*, *Le Lycée français*, etc.), the *feuilletons* of the more important newspapers (*Les Débats*, *Le Constitutionnel*, *La Quotidienne*, etc.), and the great reviews (*Revue française*, founded in 1828, *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, founded in 1829, *Revue de Paris*, also founded in 1829, etc.).

Meanwhile, University teaching, disdaining the reproaches and jest stupidly cast upon it by the romanticist school, followed in the path of this renewal of criticism, and through the eloquent voice of Villemain attracted the general public.

## I. — VILLEMAIN (1790-1867).

Abel-François Villemain became celebrated immediately upon making his début. In 1812, he received the prize for eloquence from the French Academy.

(1) Among others were: Duvergier de Hauranne (1798-1881), Ch. de Rémusat (1797-1875), Ch. Mauguin (1794-1862), J.-J. Ampère (1800-1864), etc... (See *La Presse littéraire sous la Restauration*.)



for his *Éloge de Montaigne*; in 1814, he was again "crowned" for a *Discours sur la critique*, parts of which he read at the public meeting of the Academy on April 21, 1814, at which the allied sovereigns were present; and in 1816, another prize for his *Éloge de Montesquieu*. He was a member of the Academy at the age of thirty-one, and became its *secrétaire perpétuel* in 1834, publishing a long series of annual reports. He entered the Faculty of Letters, at first as substitute professor for Guizot in the chair of history, and later as titular of the chair of eloquence in 1816, which he held until 1830. He had an immense success; a numerous and loyal public, composed of students and people of fashion, followed his lectures with a sort of passion; and the newspapers published accounts of them. It was because his diction was supple and witty, and easily rose into eloquence. After 1827 (having been turned out of the Conseil d'Etat for having intervened against the project relating to the censorship), he won applause for his political allusions in his lectures, always very discreet but always understood. Of his numerous courses of lectures he only published the *Tableau de la littérature française au moyen âge* (2 vol.) and the *Tableau de la littérature française au dix-huitième siècle* (4 vol.). After 1830 he was twice Minister of Public Instruction, and took an active part in the Upper Chamber in all the discussions relating to teaching. As perpetual secretary of the French Academy he continued to exercise the most intelligent activity, and after 1848 he devoted himself entirely to critical and historical work. It was then that he wrote his *Souvenirs d'histoire et de littérature, Études sur la littérature contemporaine, Essai sur le génie de Pindare*, etc.

It was Villemain who first began, in his time, the cultivation of historical criticism. Aug. Thierry thus judges his lectures: "I found in them the alliance, in its highest perfection, of criticism and history, the portrayal of manners and appreciation of ideas, the character of men and that of their works, the reciprocal influence of the age and the writer. This double point of view, reproduced in a multitude of forms, raises literary history to the dignity of social history, and makes it like a new science of which Villemain is the creator" (1). Nothing nowadays seems to us more natural and indispensable than to mingle biography and history with our literary studies, and to spread light over them by comparisons with foreign literatures; but it was then an innovation. Thus, in his *Moyen Age*, Villemain, who was the first to popularise the studies of Raynouard, Sismondi and Fauriel, and who discusses them with very vivid intelligence, endeavours to explain works by civilisation, manners and ideas. He passes from Provence to Italy, where he studies Dante (4th and 12th, lessons) and Petrarch (13th lesson), in search of influences and reactions; in the same way he carries us to Spain where he analyses the *Romancero* (16th lesson). All this may be somewhat hasty and superficial; but it is intel-

(1) *Récits des temps mérovingiens*, Préface (1840).

ligent, quotations are numerous and well chosen, and the details of manners and history accurate. We understand, and feel an awakening of our curiosity and sympathy. — This method is applied with more sureness and force in the *Tableau du dix-huitième siècle*. Here we find many admirable chapters on the society, philosophers and poets of England (5, 6, 7, 26 and 27th lessons, etc.), on Italian literature (40th lesson). Villemain proves himself truly an eminent

disciple of Mme de Staël (1).



VILLEMAIN IN 1821

From the lithograph by Léopold Boilly (1761-1845).

Nothing could be more unjust than the disdain now expressed concerning Villemain. Doubtless, he was too "eloquent", and had too much natural taste for fine or pointed language. But if we disengage his ideas from their now superannuated form, we must praise him for having led, in the domain of criticism, and from the height of his professional authority, a decisive movement towards relativity and cosmopolitanism.

Among Villemain's contemporaries, and his colleagues in the Faculty of Letters, we should not forget **Fauriel** (1772-1844), who

occupied the chair of foreign literature, and was one of the most exact and scientific minds of the time. His successor was **Ozanam** (1813-1853), not less learned, and who had even more brilliant oratorical success.

## II — SAINTE-BEUVE (1804-1869).

**Biography.** — Charles-Augustin de Sainte-Beuve was born at Boulogne-sur-Mer in 1804. At the age of fourteen he went to Paris to complete his education and met with brilliant success. This education left him with a very solid classical grounding, a taste for Greek, a talent for quoting appropriately from Latin authors, and perhaps a too facile rhetoric which sometimes implies sophistry. From 1824 to 1837 Sainte-Beuve attended the lectures at the medical school,

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 497; 2nd cycle, p. 1114.

and there he formed a habit of scientific research, a tendency to analogy and positivism, which resulted in his transforming criticism into a sort of "natural history".—Meanwhile, his former professor, Dubois, who had founded *Le Globe* in 1824, asked Sainte-Beuve to contribute to it. Sainte-Beuve at first wrote short articles signed S. B., but he became, in 1827, one of the most important contributors. An article on the *Odes et Ballades*, in January, 1827, brought him into relations with Victor Hugo. Being received a member of the Cénacle, he thought himself a poet, and in 1829 published : *Vie, poésies et pensées de Joseph Delorme*, and, in 1830, the *Consolations*. But he remained above all a critic. In 1828, he had already published the *Tableau de la poésie française au seizième siècle*, a collection of articles which had appeared in *Le Globe*, in which he drew up the genealogy of the romanticists, by connecting them, previous to classicism, with the Pleiad.

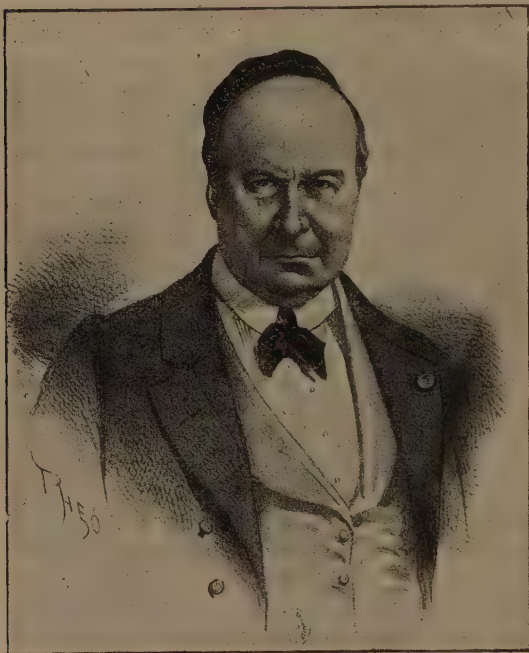
He contributed to the *Revue de Paris* his *Portraits littéraires*. At this same period he underwent a religious crisis, but soon passed from the already suspected Catholicism of Lamennais to Saint-Simonianism, which was not to have any durable influence upon him either. In 1834 he published a novel called *Volupté*. In 1837-1838 he gave a public course of lectures on Port-Royal at Lausanne, before a Protestant audience, to which he succeeded in explaining the Jansenist state of mind. Poetry again fascinated him, and, in 1837, he published *Les Pensées d'août*. In 1840 he was appointed librarian of the Mazarine library, and was received into the French Academy in 1844. In 1848, after the revolution of February, he went to Liège and gave at the University there a course of lectures on Chateaubriand (*Chateaubriand et son groupe littéraire*). He worked on the *Constitutionnel*, and after 1852 on the *Moniteur*. In 1855 he was appointed to the chair of Latin poetry in the Collège de France. But a lively opposition, due to his friendship for the new government, made this position untenable for him; he resigned, and was appointed to the *École normale supérieure*, where he taught for four years. He left the *Moniteur* in 1861 in order to go on with his *Lundis* in the *Constitutionnel*. In 1865 he was elected Senator, and died in 1869.

**Works and Method.** — In addition to three books of verse and some novels, Sainte-Beuve left : 1° Contributions to literary history such as the *Tableau de la poésie française au seizième siècle* (1 vol., 1828), *Histoire de Port-Royal* (3 vols. 1840-1860), *Chateaubriand et son groupe littéraire* (2 vols. 1860); 2° Some articles published in the *Revue de Paris*, the *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, in the *National*, the *Constitutionnel*, the *Moniteur*, the *Temps*, which have been gathered into the following volumes : *Portraits littéraires* (3 vols., 1844), *Portraits de femmes* (1 vol., 1844), *Portraits contemporains* (1846), *Causeries du lundi* (15 vols., 1857-1862), *Nouveaux lundis* (13 vols., 1863-1872), *Premiers lundis* (3 vols., published posthumously in 1875) (1).

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 503; 2nd cycle, p. 1122.

Sainte-Beuve himself said that he wished to write the "natural history of minds". He had identified himself with all the milieux, all the sentiments, sympathised with all the beliefs; his mind was "the most broken in and the most inured to metamorphosis." Having finally settled down to moral scepticism and philosophical positivism, he believed that he had no passion except for

truth. Indeed, he had a passion for exact research; he spared nothing in order to know and comprehend; he had secretaries who consulted and copied documents for him in the libraries; he did not hesitate to question useful witnesses and authors. Biography, historic milieu, current ideas, philosophy, religion, social or private influences—all these elements he analysed in his attempt to define and classify Racine or Mme de Staël, Diderot or Franklin. In this respect he fulfilled his own definition: "The critic is a man who knows how to read, and who teaches others to read". Sainte-Beuve explaining Port-Royal or the Pleiad, Boileau or La Rochefoucauld, is indeed the most intelligent of critics; he only annoys by an excess of detachment and suppleness,



SAINTE-BEUVE

From the lithograph by Théo.

an air of "not caring", which betrays, with all his intelligence, the absence of moral grandeur or even dignity.

This fault becomes exaggerated when he deals with his contemporaries. In the first articles which he wrote about the romanticists, he over-praised them, as he felt himself inferior to them as a poet or novelist; but as he became more independent as a critic of their work, he also became ill-natured. His lectures at Liège on Chateaubriand, just after the death of a man whom he had adulated, is a masterpiece of penetrating criticism but an action of doubtful decency. Some of his articles on Lamartine, Vigny, Balzac, are somewhat pal-



try; Sainte-Beuve emphasizes every detail which may lower or make these great men ridiculous, and with an affectation of scientific sincerity which luckily deceives nobody.

We may learn, then, from Sainte-Beuve how to penetrate to the very core of a subject, how to dissect a work, to explain and show its essential characteristics; we may learn from him, also, how to feel beauty and truth; but we can never have for the man himself more than a mediocre esteem.

### III. — SAINT-MARC GIRARDIN (1801-1873).

Saint-Marc Girardin distinguished himself at first, like Villemain, by his academic success (*Eloge de Le Sage*, *Eloge de Bossuet*, etc.). A liberal under the Restoration, he contributed to various newspapers such as *Le Mercure du dix-neuvième siècle* and the *Revue française*, and especially the *Journal des Débats*. In 1833, he was appointed to the Faculty of Letters, at first as substitute professor to Guizot, then as titular of the chair of French poetry. From 1834 to 1848, he was a deputy; but he never interrupted his lectures at the Sorbonne, continuing them until 1863.

His chief works, which consist of his public lessons revised and collected, are: *Cours de littérature dramatique ou De l'Usage des passions dans le drame* (4 vols., 1843), *La Fontaine et les Fabulistes* (2 vols., 1867), *J.-J. Rousseau, sa vie et ses œuvres* (2 vols., posthumously published, with a preface by E. Bersot, 1873). In other volumes Girardin collected various newspaper articles, reports, etc. (1).

Saint-Marc Girardin is a moralist-critic. As a disciple of Villemain and contemporary of Sainte-Beuve he did not neglect history, but dealt with facts less than manners and morals, and studied biography less than character (see especially his *J.-J. Rousseau*). Furthermore, he liked to develop his work beyond the limits of a monograph by considering the evolution of ideas, or of different literary methods as they were applied to the portrayal of the same sentiment. Thus, in his *Cours de littérature dramatique*, he studies paternal love successively among the ancients, the French classics and the romanticists, and treats in the same way of patriotism, of the religious feeling, etc. A critic of this kind may be reproached with inclining too far towards didactic and moral teaching; but Girardin was always the professor. He was conscious that he addressed the public and especially youth, and believed it his duty to guide them to all that is healthy and lofty. If this is a fault, there is surely none more honourable.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1133

## IV. — NISARD (1806-1888). — UNIVERSITY CRITICS.

A contributor to the *Journal des Débats*, later to the *National*, Désiré Nisard became in 1835 head-lecturer at the École Normale Supérieure; then, in 1844,



NISARD IN 1839

From the lithograph by Adolphe.

professor of Latin eloquence at the Collège de France; in 1852, professor of French eloquence at the Sorbonne, and in 1857 director of the École Normale. In 1833 he began to distinguish himself by a lively opposition to romanticism; and it was in that year he published in *Le National* a celebrated manifesto against facile literature. He continued this campaign in his *Études sur les poètes latins de la décadence* (2 vols., 1834), a piquant work full of ill-natured allusions to his contemporaries (see particularly the chapter on Lucain, directed against Victor Hugo). He afterwards published numerous articles in the leading reviews on French and foreign literature which have since been gathered into several volumes, and edited the *Collection des auteurs latins*, with French translations (Didot).

But Nisard's most remarkable work is his *Histoire de la littérature française* (4 vols., 1861) (1). It would be difficult to find a work in more complete opposition, whether for theories, method or style, to the articles of Sainte-Beuve. While the latter studied each writer separately, lending himself to the bent of each author's mind in order to make him understood and enjoyed, Nisard subjected the whole development of French literature to one law. He thus

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 509; 2nd cycle, p. 1139.

defines his criticism : " I found an ideal for the human mind in books, an ideal for the individual genius of France, another ideal for the French tongue ; each author and each book is studied with respect to this triple ideal. Such as approach it are good, those separated from it are bad. " What, then, is this ideal ? " It is the expression of universal truths in perfect language, that is to say, in perfect conformity with the genius of the country, that speaks it and with the human mind. " So Nisard considers the seventeenth century as the culminating point, or rather as the elevated plateau from which unequal steps take us back to the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century, or from which we descend through the eighteenth century down to our own time.—This method results in several faults. First, it is a system rather than a method. It is taken for granted that such and such a writer, according as he belongs or does not belong to the seventeenth century, must express or not express " universal truths in a definitive style. " Thus, Nisard dismisses, with the haste of indifference, the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century. He does not know the Middle Ages well, nor does he wish to know them ; and he never seems to suspect that the ancient French language, that of a Chrétien de Troyes or of a Villehardouin, could be in itself as perfect as that of the seventeenth century. In the sixteenth century, he only esteems Montaigne, and merely in so far as the *Essais* foretell Pascal or La Bruyère. As to Ronsard, Nisard only makes comments upon Boileau's judgment, so conformable to his own system, and with an obstinacy and levity which are inexcusable thirty years after the works of Sainte-Beuve. Nisard broadens his thesis somewhat with respect to the eighteenth century, and admits that with loss there was also some gain. He succeeds in classing almost justly men like Voltaire, Rousseau, Buffon and Chénier.—Another defect of his book is the really too limited part played by history and social influences. It is true that great writers distinguish themselves by their own genius ; but they also belong to their own time, not only like a number in a series, but by their own individuality.—Finally, the result of Nisard's system is that he adopts a positive, doctoral, imperious tone, which seems to leave no room for the opinions of others. In reading his book, the reader feels too much like a pupil under the ferule of the schoolmaster.

But what admirable chapters there are on Corneille, Racine, Pascal, Molière, Bossuet, in fact, all the great writers who stand alone, and, in their masterpieces at least, belong to the domain of the absolute ! In this Nisard evinces superior understanding of those essentially national qualities ; he sets up as a defender of the works against any kind of internal or external alteration ; he is distrustful of foreign literatures which might adulterate the French mind. In short, he lacks historical sense and curiosity ; but he has left behind a lasting monument, because he thinks and teaches others to think.

Among University critics, more or less disciples of Villemain, Sainte-Beuve, Nisard, Taine and Renan, we should mention : *Constant Martha* (1820-1895),

a professor at the Sorbonne, whose *Le Poème de Lucrèce*, *Lès Moralistes sous l'Empire romain*, and *La Délicatesse dans l'art*, remain as finished models of the finest French scholarship ;—**Gaston Boissier** (1823-1906), a professor at the Collège de France, a writer of exact learning allied with charm of style, author of *Cicéron et ses amis*, *La Religion romaine*, *L'Opposition sous les Césars*, etc.—**Oct. Gréard** (1828-1907), rector of the University of Paris, wrote chiefly on pedagogical questions (*Madame de Maintenon* ; *L'Éducation des femmes par les femmes*).

**Gaston Paris** (1839-1903), professor at the Collège de France, was for many years the master of Romance learning. He wrote the *Histoire poétique de Charlemagne* and a *Histoire de la littérature au moyen âge*, and collected into three volumes a few of his numerous articles published in the *Journal des Savants*. But it was especially in his teaching that he gave the measure of his powerful intellect and rich erudition ; all the *romanistes* now in French and foreign universities have been his disciples.

## V. — TAINÉ (1828-1893).

A student at the École Normale, and professor of philosophy, Taine early left the University, where the boldness of his ideas brought him into difficulties. In 1853, he published his doctorate thesis, which later he rewrote and made into the charming and spirited work entitled *La Fontaine et ses Fables* (1860) (1). After this he published his *Essai sur Tit-Live* (1855) ; *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* (1863) ; *Voyage en Italie* (1865) ; and *De l'Intelligence* (1870). From 1876 to 1890 he published *Les Origines de la France contemporaine* (3 vols) (2). In 1881, he collected under the title *Philosophie de l'art*, four studies, the product of his lectures at l'École des Beaux-Arts, where he had held a professorship since 1863. His *Études critiques*, which were articles published in various periodicals, have been collected into three volumes : *Essais* (1858), *Nouveaux Essais* (1865), and *Derniers Essais de critique et d'histoire* (1894) (3).

Taine's method is that of Sainte-Beuve developed to its extreme logical consequences under the influence of positivist philosophy. He expounds his system in the preface to *l'Histoire de la littérature anglaise* (1863). Literary works are, from Taine's point of view, manifestations of the way of thinking and feeling of a whole race at a given moment, in a given milieu. From this standpoint he studies Shakespeare, Milton, Swift, Byron, who are representative types of English genius in the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In his doctorate thesis and in his *Essais de critique*, he ap-

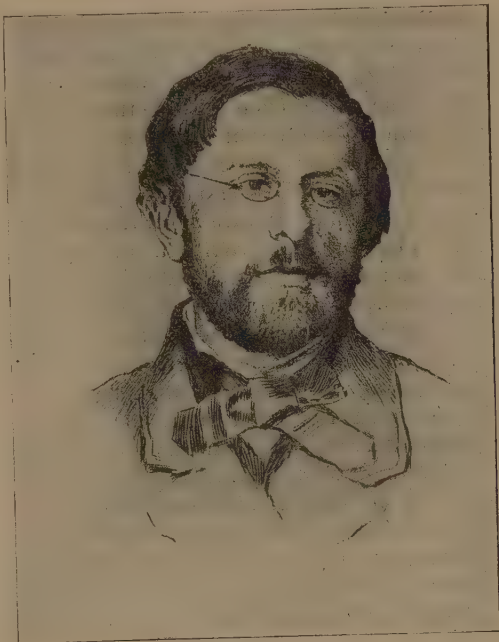
(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 524 ; 2nd cycle, p. 1145.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1152.

(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, 522.



plies the same method to La Fontaine, Racine, Balzac, and Stendhal. Even more than in the work of Sainte-Beuve this is the "natural history of minds." But Sainte-Beuve has very truly refuted all that is exaggerated in this system: "...Between a fact so general and common to all as soil and climate," he says, "and so complicated and various a result as the variety of species and individuals living there, there is room for a number of more special and more immediate causes and forces; and as long as these have not been apprehended, nothing has been really explained. The same is true of men belonging to the same century, that is to say, men who live in the same moral climate: when we study them, one by one, we can point out the relation they bear to the time in which they were born and in which they lived; but never, if we know only that epoch, or even if we know it thoroughly through its chief characteristics, can we conclude in advance that it must give birth to such and such a kind of men, or such and such a form of talent (1)."



TAINE IN 1865  
From a photograph.

Taine is equally systematic in his art criticism. His first effort is to make us understand the country, manners and customs among which the artist has been formed and has grown, in order to explain to us how the statues of a Phidias, the pictures of a Raphael or a Rembrandt were conditioned by race, time and milieu. However, and almost in spite of himself, Taine is also preoccupied, in this kind of criticism, with æsthetic and moral influences.

Though too systematic and too absolute, Taine has the great merit of having introduced more scientific precision into literary criticism, which always has a tendency to sink into dilettantism or moral dissertation. Furthermore, he

(1) *Causeries du Lundi*, vol. XIII.

has clothed his ideas in a style which, though somewhat strained and conscious, is remarkable, for its brilliance.

## VI. — DRAMATIC CRITICISM : FRANCISQUE SARCEY.

Following Jules Janin, who occupied for many years — from 1836 to 1874 — the “ rez-de-chaussée ” of the *Journal des Débats*, there were numerous dramatic critics. Of these the most famous was **Francisque Sarcey** (1828-1899), who wrote, from 1859-67, the dramatic feuilleton of *L'Opinion nationale*, and from 1867-99 that of *Le Temps*. Some of his articles have been collected into eight volumes, under the title of *Quarante ans de théâtre*.

Sarcey is neither a dogmatic theorist, nor moralist, philosopher or humanist; he is rather an admixture of all these, for he does not lack ideas, sentiments, literary knowledge or erudition. But he subordinates everything to a more general rule : he goes to the theatre to see a theatrical work ; he examines it as a spectator, in its proper perspective, and judges it according to its more or less clever use of necessary theatrical conventions. By means of this system Sarcey renewed, to a certain degree, the criticism of the classical repertory, by emphasising the dramatic craftsmanship of the authors, heretofore too exclusively regarded as psychologists or moralists. But he too highly estimated clever dramatists like Scribe and Sardou, from whom he demanded nothing beyond their art or even their artifices. He has given too much importance to the vaudeville, the melodrama and all the popular theatrical productions. Finally, he did not thoroughly understand such contemporaries as Augier and Dumas *fils*; and he was totally blind to any contemporary novelties or to the beauty of foreign plays.

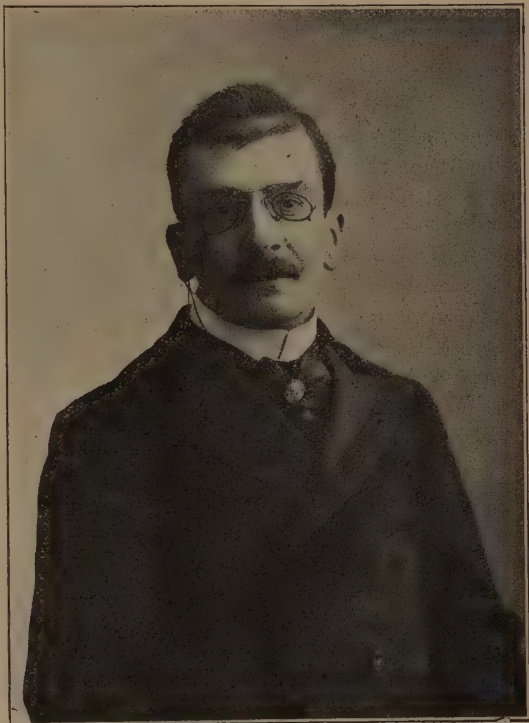
As a lecturer Sarcey had charming personal qualities.

## VII — F. BRUNETIÈRE (1849-1907).

In 1875 Ferdinand Brunetière published his first articles in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. He remained always one of its principal contributors, and in time became its editor. In 1886 he was appointed head-lecturer at the *École normale supérieure*. At the same time he showed himself a powerful orator in his lectures at the Odéon, especially in the series of 1892, which he collected under the title : *Les Époques du théâtre français*. In 1893, he gave a course of lectures at the Sorbonne, which later formed the two volumes entitled *Évolution de la poésie lyrique au dix-neuvième siècle*. Meanwhile he also published : *Le Roman naturaliste* (1880), *Études critiques* (8 series from 1881 to 1906), *Histoire et littérature* (3 vols., 1882-1884), *L'Évolution des genres* (1889), etc. In 1898, his *Manuel de l'Histoire de la littérature française* came out, which he announced

as the sketch of a more important work, and in fact he had begun to publish the first two instalments of his *Histoire de la littérature française classique* (*Le Mouvement de la Renaissance, La Pléiade*) when he died (1).

Brunetière was primarily a scholar with an extraordinary capacity for work. Except the Middle Ages, which did not attract him, he had thoroughly explored all literary sources and texts and he excelled in assimilating the works of contemporary critics. To this treasure of learning, which he daily increased, Brunetière added a knowledge of contemporary philosophers and savants: Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Hæckel, Schopenhauer, Auguste Comte. He tried to apply their theories to literary criticism, without accepting them altogether from the moral point of view, and expounded his own theories on the "evolution of the genres." A genre—the epic, lyricism, the novel, etc.,—is born, develops, is transformed, dies, or rather is merged into another genre, according to its milieu, its time, the influences surrounding it, etc. Apart from this main theory, which, upon reflection, has perhaps no other defect than that of being self-evident, Brunetière put forth others, which seem more important in assigning



FERDINAND BRUNETIÈRE

From a photograph by Reutlinger.

him his place in nineteenth century criticism: he gave up the scientific indifference of a Sainte-Beuve or a Taine. He wished, and thought it his duty, not only to classify works, but to judge them. According to him, there are *good* works and *bad* works; and among the latter, he ranks those which have no other object than the petty individuality of the author, or the servile reproduction of external nature. He combats, first in the name of morals but also

(1) This work has been continued from notes left by Brunetière.

in the name of literature, the doctrine of art for art's sake. His greatest admiration is for those classical writers who are an honour to the human mind as well as to French genius : Pascal, Bossuet, Corneille ; he likes less, or even detests, the Voltaires and Rousseaus ; he is severe upon the naturalist novel, upon dramatic authors who only seek to excite laughter, upon dilettante critics, etc. In short, though his theory of the evolution of the genres relates him to Sainte-Beuve and Taine, he is a moral critic.

To defend his ideas, which he always expressed as theses or pleas, Brunetière possessed remarkable oratorical talents. A reader who has not heard him, has not been under the influence of his strong speech and his gestures at once solemn and violent, cannot understand his style. He composes admirably ; arranges his proofs like a preacher ; prepares, brings on and formulates conclusions, which form a definite reply to the objections he has stated. Less incisive and metaphorical than Taine, he has more movement and amplitude (1).

We must also mention the names of :—**Alex. Vinet** (1797-1847), a moral critic, very penetrating, and often very profound ;—**Ernest Renan**, whom we refer to in the chapter on Historians ;—**Paul de Saint Victor** (1827-1881), a romanticist critic, in the most unfavourable sense of the word, impetuous and declamatory ;—**Émile Montégut** (1826-1895), who applied keen intelligence to foreign literatures ; **Edmond Schérer** (1815-1889), a philosophical critic, more sensitive to ideas than to art ;—**A. de Pontmartin** (1811-1890), more a witty journalist than a critic.

## VIII. — CONTEMPORARIES.

Among contemporary critics we should also point out : **M. Anatole France**, better known now by his novels than by his criticism, but who contributed " *La Vie Littéraire* " to *Le Temps* newspaper for several years. He is essentially subjective and impressionistic (2) ;—**M. René Doumic**, editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and a favourite lecturer, remarkable for the sureness and finesse of his diagnostic, and for his concise and witty style ;—and the two " *maîtres du chœur*," Jules Lemaitre and Émile Faguet.

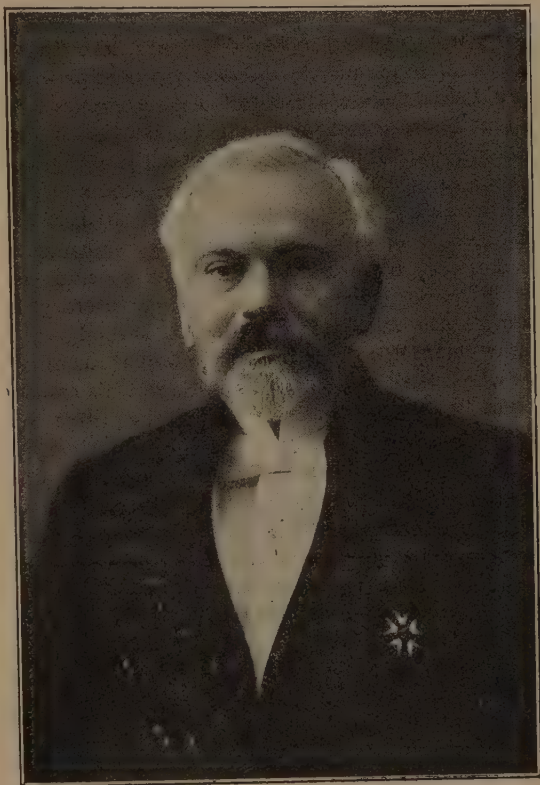
**JULES LEMAITRE** (1853-1914) made his début with some verses, as a disciple of Théophile Gautier and Baudelaire, and published a series of articles on his contemporaries in the *Revue bleue*, beginning in 1885. He then became dramatic critic on the *Journal des Débats* and the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. His articles were collected into seven volumes called *Contemporains*, and ten volumes entitled *Impressions de théâtre*. He added two series of lectures on

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 526 ; 2nd cycle, p. 1154.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 529 ; 2nd cycle, p. 1167.



J.-J. Rousseau (1906), Racine (1908), Fénelon (1910) and Chateaubriand (1911), which met with great success. We shall speak elsewhere of his plays.—Jules Lemaître is difficult to define and classify ; his work is very intelligent and well documented, he had a horror of dogmatism whether in argument or style, and he set forth his ideas and theories with apparent detachment, as impressions open to discussion, and which he only held to be spontaneous and sincere. But he was very sure of his preferences, of his likes and dislikes. For him, a literary work should be disinterested, faithful, clear, and human. He was a lover of the classics, especially Racine and Molière, and among the moderns, Lamartine, Augier and Dumas the younger. He detested declamatory writers, literary manufacturers, and all those who dealt in commonplaces or rarities. Thus he reproached Rousseau with having circulated so many false ideas, Hugo with having abused his virtuosity, such and such a contemporary novelist with having “earned too much money” out of mediocre books, and such and such a “chronicler” for having forced himself upon the stupidity of the public by his aplomb. However, Lemaître possessed such an open and curious mind, capable of assimilating the most dissimilar forms of art, that he became vividly interested in Ibsen's plays, and was one of the first to understand and explain them.—He did not handle as many subjects as Sainte-Beuve, and liked better to penetrate into the genius of writers than to examine the circumstances under which they wrote ; he is a psychological critic in the full



JULES LEMAÎTRE

From a photograph by Bert

force of the term. And his style is superior to Sainte-Beuve's. Critical articles can almost always be rewritten and brought up to date by more recent scholarly works ; but Lemaitre gives a turn to his ideas and analyses which is so definitive and imperious, in spite of its elegance and courtesy, that he is not imitated, but he is quoted (1).

**EMILE FAGUET** (1847-1916) was, like Lemaitre, a student at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, a University professor, a dramatic critic on the *Journal des Débats* and a contributor to the *Revue des Deux-Mondes*. He published studies of the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries ; some *Notes sur le théâtre* (3 vols. a collection of the dramatic *feuilletons* of the newspaper *Le Soleil*, 1880-1883) ; some *Questions de théâtre* (1890-1898) ; studies on *Politiques et Moralistes du dix-neuvième siècle* (3 vols., 1894-1900), etc., and in addition to these, works on sociology and political philosophy.

Emile Faguet presents great writers from every point of view : their lives, their moral ideas (especially), their literary ideas, art, style, etc. He attempts to reduce the genius of Montaigne, J.-J. Rousseau, Victor Hugo, Mme de Staël, to piquant but powerful formulas. Each paragraph is a frame in which the author appears in one of his essential mental attitudes. Faguet's style is concise, antithetical and suggestive in the highest degree. Though less eloquent than Brunetière's and less elegant than Lemaitre's, it is more animated and more unexpected ; its restraint often produces strong effects, and there are sudden turns of expression which betray the contained enthusiasm or emotion which master the writer. As a dramatic critic he was remarkably honest and candid, and his method was original, seeking always what was humanly true in a play, and estimating it less by its merits of craftsmanship than by its subject. If the psychology of a character was incomplete, he called the author's attention to the elements which were lacking. On the other hand, like Sarcey and Lemaitre, he liked to discuss the classic plays, and this resulted in a series of *feuilletons* about Corneille, Racine, Molière, etc., which will always be regarded as among the most incisive and sensible of their kind (1).

In his later works (on *Nietzsche*, *Platon*, *Le Socialisme*, etc.), Faguet inclined more to the treatment of moral and sociological questions, bringing as much intelligence and broadmindedness to these subjects as to literary criticism.

## IX. — SCIENTIFIC WRITERS.

In a history of French literature in the nineteenth century, an important place must be given to scientific authors ; but we shall only refer to those

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1176.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 533 ; 2nd cycle, p. 1169.

whose style is truly original, and who will always deserve to be read, less for having explained individual discoveries in definitive language, than for having written of science in general, or of its influence upon themselves: in short, we shall only deal with those who were philosophers or poets.

**CUVIER** (1769-1832) founded palæontology and comparative anatomy. His method is chiefly set forth in his *Discours sur les révolutions de la surface du globe*, which serves as a Preface to the seven volumes of his *Recherches sur les ossements fossiles* (1812-1822). His style is well-poised, ample, and animated and sustained by a truly grandiose scientific imagination. We have already said that Cuvier, when replying in the French Academy to the discourse delivered at the reception of Lamartine, made a definitive analysis of the poetry of the *Meditations*.



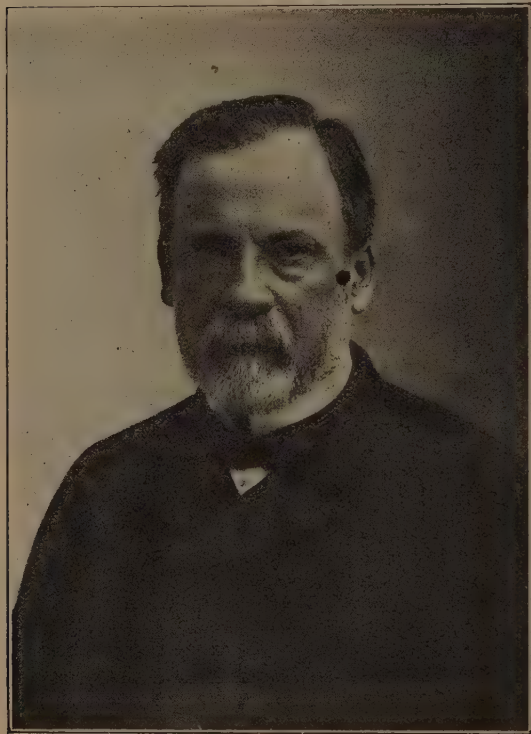
GEORGES CUVIER

From the portrait painted by François Vincent (1748-1816) and engraved by Miger.

**AMPÈRE** (1775-1836), gifted with an exquisite sensibility and a prodigious intelligence, has left admirable scientific works, the chief of which—from the point of view we have indicated—is his *Essai sur la philosophie des sciences* (1834-1844). After his death, his *Journal et Correspondance* was published, which revealed all the spiritual delicacy of the man, and by its freshness and sincerity offered a restful contrast to so many literary letters.

**ARAGO** (1786-1853) is another of those savants whose character (very different, however, from Ampère's), is equal to their intelligence. He was as admirable as a professor as he was distinguished as a writer. His lectures at the Observatoire were celebrated, and the *Biographies* which he wrote in his

capacity as perpetual secretary to the French Academy still serve as models. During the Revolution of 1848, he played a noble and disinterested role along with Lamartine.



PASTEUR

From a photograph by Nadar.

style. His letters are especially fascinating, and seem to be written by a man to whom nothing is unknown, who knows how to be a son, a friend, a husband or a father, and uses none of those ready-made phrases so easily substituted, even by the most sincere persons, for a direct transcription of emotion. No praise is too great for his *Oraison funèbre de Sainte-Claire Deville*, beside which all eulogies of this kind seem conventional and cold (2).

It is in reading so many pages, calm, naïve, profound, and sublime, written

### CLAUDE BERNARD

(1813-1878) was professor at the Collège de France, at the Sorbonne and the Museum, and in 1865 published his *Introduction à la Médecine expérimentale*, the most important scientific and philosophical work of the second half of the nineteenth century. The method he exposes in this work may be applied to history and criticism as well as to the experimental sciences (1).

### PASTEUR (1822-1895)

—Everyone knows the works of Pasteur, so fine in themselves, and so fruitful of magnificent results in the hands of his disciples and continuators. Pasteur was also a very remarkable writer. He presents his discoveries, or scientific ideas, in his reports, and discourses in a clear, methodical, simple and dispassionate

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1182.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1186.



by savants who had never learned to "write", but who transmitted directly, with no thought except for truth and precision, their discoveries, feelings, or dreams, that we realize the absurdity of "literary methods." The pure source from which sprang the style of a Pascal or a Pasteur, was the necessity to know, to understand, to feel, and to be irresistibly forced to communicate to other men their convictions and their emotions.

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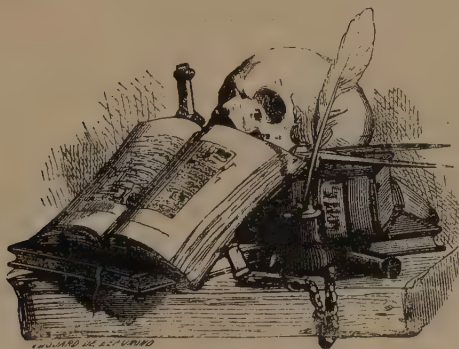
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ROMANTICIST PAGE ORNAMENT



FRIEZE TAKEN FROM A ROMANTICIST BOOK

## CHAPTER VIII.

### HISTORY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

#### SUMMARY

1° In the nineteenth century, history was renewed by three influences : the Revolution, scientific progress, and romanticism.

2° **GENERAL DEVELOPMENT.**—Most of the historians who wrote during the Restoration went into politics after 1830; the Revolution of July gave an impulse to liberal theories, and created a new enthusiasm in history;—after 1850, history tended more and more to be a disinterested science.

3° **AUGUSTIN THIERRY** (1795-1856) began as an opposition journalist, and unfolded, as an argument for liberal politics, his theory of racial struggle; he developed his ideas in *l'Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands* (1825), and in his *Histoire du Tiers État*. He became less systematic and more picturesque in his *Récits des temps mérovingiens* (1833-40). — **DE BARANTE** (1782-1866) limited himself to summing up the old chronicles in an exact and vivid narrative, in his *Histoire des ducs de Bourgogne* (1826).

4° **GUIZOT** (1787-1874), a professor at the Sorbonne, became minister after 1830, and did not give up politics until 1851.—A philosopher in the domain of history, and a disciple of Montesquieu, he studied the laws of European civilisation, in which he brought to light the **Roman, German and Christian** elements (*Histoire de la civilisation*, 1828-30; *Révolution d'Angleterre*, 1826).

5° **THIERS** (1797-1877) launched into politics in 1830. An accurate and highly intelligent historian, very well informed and clear, he wrote *l'Histoire de la*

**Révolution française** (1823-27), *l'Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire* (1845-1863).—**MIGNET** (1796-1884), devoted himself to limited subjects, which he treated exhaustively (**Marie Stuart**, 1851; **Charles-Quint**, 1854).

6° **MICHELET** (1798-1874), after a hard-working youth, became director of the historical archives, and professor at the Collège de France. Between 1833-1844, he wrote the first six volumes of his *Histoire de France*, in which his qualities as a savant and poet are harmoniously combined. After 1848, influenced by events and persecuted by the Imperial government, he became more excited and his *Histoire* lost its scientific qualities. According to Michelet, history is the complete resurrection of the past. His style is romantic.

7° AFTER **MICHELET** came **HENRI MARTIN**, **TAINÉ**, **FUSTEL DE COULANGES**, **RENAN**, **V. DURUY**.

## I. — INFLUENCES.



GROTESQUE INITIAL  
of the XIX century.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, history was revived and transformed by various influences:

1° The Revolution marked the end of a regime and of a society, and gave perspective to all previous history. This violent break with the past had remote causes: it was a consequence and a result. People would naturally be led to study and criticise the political institutions of monarchical France. It was early perceived that manners and morals, as well as laws, explain facts; and that the movements, which produce sudden and noisy catastrophes on the surface, are themselves produced by slow and mysterious forces underneath. Attention was therefore turned more and more to the "underside of history". The people, the bourgeoisie, municipal and private life, memoirs,

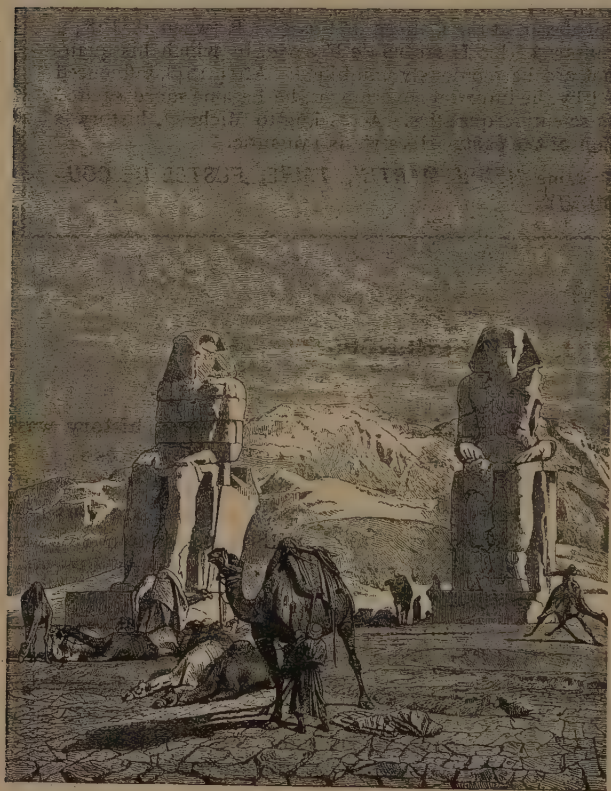
letters, documents both financial and administrative, and a whole mass of "infinitely small things" were to be collected and subjected to "critical reactions." For it was necessary to explain once more how the Revolution had been possible. This explains why we shall see certain historians beginning by liberal politics, and disclosing their historical theories in polemical arguments,—such as Augustin Thierry,—while others pass from history to politics, or carry on both together, such as Guizot and Thiers.

2° Scientific Progress. — This must be considered from two points of view.  
a) Since the time of Bayle and Fontenelle the French mind had more and more

abandoned metaphysics and speculative science for positive science. Natural history, physics, chemistry, historical jurisprudence, religious exegesis, etc., had become the objects of curiosity and study. Doubtless, utopians like Jean-Jacques

Rousseau were to have a preponderant and disastrous influence upon the Revolution, but by accident only. The positive and scientific spirit was to triumph in the State, in philosophy and criticism, and history must gain in consequence. —

b) But history was to profit especially by progress which touched it more nearly, namely, archaeological and philological discoveries, the creation of certain museums, the publication of great collections of historical and palaeographical documents (in which the admirable work of the Benedictines was continued). Already, the discoveries at Pompeii (begun in 1748, but the most important



THE COLOSSI OF MEMNON  
*From a drawing by Gérôme.*

The French Expedition in Egypt in 1799, everybody knows, was the origin of the great archaeological discoveries, and of the first progress of Egyptology.

excavations were not made until 1807-1815, under the reign of Murat at Naples), the works of Choiseul-Gouffier on Troy, those of the Count de Caylus, had inspired the researches of architects, artists and historians. The museum of French monuments, created by the Convention, established in the cloister of the Petits-Augustins, and directed by Alexandre



Lenoir, collected fragments of French châteaux and churches. Under the Restoration the government founded the *Ecole des chartes*, established museums of ancient sculpture and Egyptology at the Louvre; Champollion, in 1822, deciphered the meaning of hieroglyphics; and Anquetil-Duperron, Abel Rémusat, Silvestre de Sacy and Burnouf brought Asiatic research to a high degree of development. Under Louis-Philippe this movement made a still further advance, and the Commission for Historic Monuments (Guizot, Salvandy, Vitet and Mérimée) was permanently appointed to guard the riches of French national architecture. The School of Athens was founded, and the School of Oriental Languages (begun in 1793) was reorganised. Provincial academies began to rival one another in archaeological activity, and published many memoirs. Meanwhile, the collection of documents continued under the guidance of private or official directors, and special reviews published works devoted to the Middle Ages, the Orient and antiquity, etc. (1).

3° A third influence was exerted upon history, which completed and to a certain degree contradicted the two preceding ones, namely, romanticism. Romanticism, in so far as it refers to creative imagination, the research and divination of local colour, is an aid to learning, and vitalises criticism. Chateaubriand, Mme de Staël and Sir Walter Scott exerted a deep and useful influence upon Barante, A. Thierry, Michelet and Thiers himself. But romanticism also includes artistic fancy and social utopia, and tends to the declamatory. In this respect its powerful influence was hurtful to some historians; and while, for instance, Augustin Thierry freed his work more and more from the faults of romanticism, a Michelet or a Quinet continued to lose his sense of reality in a state of exaltation.

## II. — GENERAL DEVELOPMENT.

Before studying individually the principal historians of this epoch, it is necessary to present them and their works in a general survey. The great historic events—the Restoration, 1830, 1848 and 1870—had a very serious effect upon their minds and methods.

**Under the Restoration.**—Chateaubriand was the first to expound his knowledge of Christianity and the Middle Ages in his *Génie* (1802), and to produce some models of historical writing which were both based upon documents and were picturesque, in a few passages in the *Martyrs* (1809). Now, it must not be over-

(1) The *Introduction* of the *Extraits des historiens français* by C. JULLIAN (Hachette). For further details we refer the student to this excellent work, a model of precision and method.



RUINS OF TANCARVILLE CASTLE

From a composition by Evariste Fragonard (1780-1850)  
lithographed by Engelmann, taken from the *Voyage pittoresque et romantique en France*.  
by Taylor and Cayeux, published from 1820 to 1863.

looked that these works were enthusiastically read by A. Thierry (born in 1795) (1), by Thiers (born in 1797) and by Michelet (born in 1798). None of these young men, nor Guizot (born in 1787), nor Mignet (1796), had seen the Revolution ; they reached maturity during the great Imperial epoch, and especially at the moment when the Restoration gave France her Parliamentary regime and comparative freedom to the press. So many terrible and grandiose events, happening within a period of thirty years, were well calculated to ripen thought and rouse imagination. On the other hand, politics fascinated them all. Guizot, in his Sorbonne lectures, could not help being obsessed, in spite of himself, by contemporary French history when he dealt with the English revolutions or with European civilisation. Thierry made his début in 1817 as a liberal journalist, with his articles apropos of historical works in the *Censeur européen*. It was in these articles that he propounded his theory of the races, and that he published (in May, 1820) his *Histoire véritable de Jacques Bonhomme*. Then in July, 1820, he began his *Lettres sur l'histoire de France* in the *Courrier français*. Meanwhile, Guizot published, in 1823, his *Essais sur l'histoire de France*, and in the same year, Thiers underlook his *Histoire de la Révolution française* (1823-1827). Though politics inspired certain works, romanticism influenced others in their taste for picturesque detail and local colour, as in the *Histoire des ducs de Bourgogne*, by de Barante (1824). But it was still theory which predominated in Thierry's *Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands* (1823), and in *La Révolution d'Angleterre* (1826) and *La Civilisation en Europe* (1828) by Guizot.

**Under Louis-Philippe.**—The period between 1830 and 1848 was especially productive, though politics had drawn the attention of Guizot from his works, and, until 1843, that of Thiers also. But Augustin Thierry, who saw, in the revolution of July, the triumph of his theories, and who became less combative and more of an artist, was to publish from 1833 to 1840 his *Récits des temps mérovingiens* ; Tocqueville was to publish in 1836 the first part of his *Démocratie en Amérique* ; Henri Martin to begin his *Histoire des Romains* (1843), and Thiers *Le Consulat et l'Empire* (1845) ; Lamartine, in 1847, his poetic *Histoire des Girondins* ; and Quinet, in 1848, his *Révolutions d'Italie*. But, above everything, in the light of the revolution of 1830, which seemed to conciliate all parties and finally realise the hopes of 1789, Michelet "perceived France" (1) ; he published, from 1833-1844, the first six volumes of his *Histoire de France* and, from 1847-1853, his *Histoire de la Révolution*.

**After 1848.**—1848 was again a climacteric date in the evolution of these great minds who at once became over-excited, but who were dispersed or

(1) See the *Préface des Récits mérovingiens*.

(2) *Préface* of 1869.

beaten by the coup d'État of 1851 and the restoration of the Empire. Meanwhile—with the exception of Michelet, who, while continuing his *Histoire de France* from 1855 to 1867, lost more and more his sense of reality and proportion—historians made some progress with respect to impartiality, erudition and method. Mignet published his *Charles-Quint* in 1854; Camille Rousset his *Histoire de Louvois* in 1861; Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* in 1856. But the most striking event was the appearance of three new historians who, each in his own manner, renewed a genre which seemed to have already produced its finest fruits: Renan began his *Histoire des origines du christianisme* in 1863; Taine his *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* in the same year; and, most eminent of all, the writer in whom the modern scientific spirit is incarnated with grandiose simplicity, Fustel de Coulanges, wrote in 1864 *La Cité antique*, which was followed in 1874 by his *Institutions politiques de l'ancienne France*. In this same year Taine began his *Origines de la France contemporaine*.

It is customary to classify nineteenth century historians in schools. We believe, with M. F. Hémon (1) that this classification is unprofitable; nor shall we adopt the much broader plan which he proposes. Literary history should differentiate rather than classify and we shall choose, therefore, the chronological order preferred by M. C. Jullian in speaking of each historian separately.

### III — AUGUSTIN THIERRY (1795-1856).

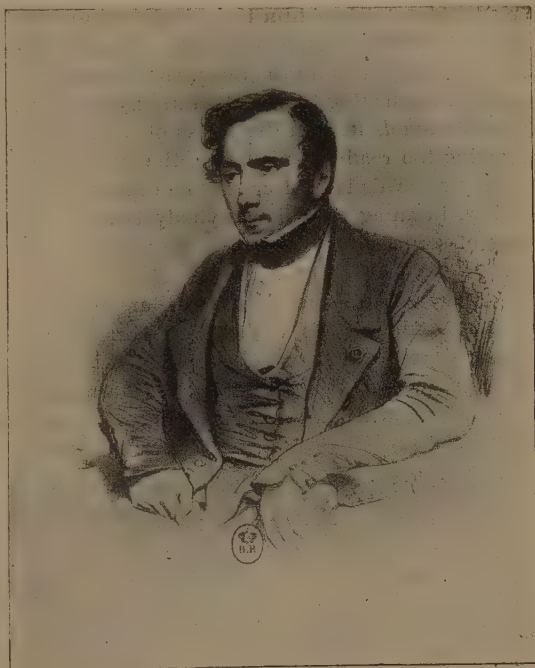
**Biography.**—Augustin Thierry entered the *École normale* in 1811. He left the University in 1815 to become secretary to Saint-Simon, celebrated for his economics and social utopia. But he soon left this man of cloudy intelligence, so nomill-assorted with his own qualities of precision and vigour. In 1817 he commenced to contribute to the *Censeur européen* some articles which, rewritten later on, formed a notable part of his volume entitled *Dix ans d'études historiques* (1834). To the *Courrier Français* he contributed ten *Lettres sur l'histoire de France*, collected in a volume in 1827 and followed by fifteen others (2). *L'Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands* appeared in 1825, in four volumes. It was then that Thierry became blind. The courageous resignation with which he submitted to this infirmity is well-known. He continued, with the help of his wife and his secretaries, to examine his documents and to write, sustained by the conviction that his work was useful to his country. He says, in the preface to his *Dix ans d'études historiques*:

(1) F. HÉMON, *Cours de littérature*, XVI; *L'Histoire au dix-neuvième siècle*, p. 5, Delagrave.

(2) *Revue d'histoire littéraire*, Augustin Thierry journaliste, by CH.-M. DES GRANGES (April-May, 1906).



"..That is what I have done, and what I shall yet do. If I had to begin all over again, I should again choose the road which has led me where I now am. Blind and suffering without hope and almost without cessation, I am able to give testimony, the truth of which, because given by me, will not be suspected: in this world there is something which is worth more than material enjoyment, more than fortune, more than health itself: it is the pursuit of knowledge." Under these conditions he prepared and published his *Récits des temps mérovingiens* (1833-1840). After his *Considérations sur l'histoire de France* (1840) he occupied himself in gathering documents on mediæval townships for the collection edited by Guizot; and from these he wrote his *Essai sur la formation et les progrès de l'histoire du tiers état*.



AUGUSTIN THIERRY IN 1848

From the lithograph by Emile Lassalle.

**His Theories.**—In order to understand Augustin Thierry we must first speak of him as a theorist who sought, in historical documents, arguments in support of his liberal ideas, and developed, almost into a system, a disputable thesis: viz. the persistent antagonism

between the conquering race and that which has been conquered. This thesis, set forth in his articles in the *Censeur européen* and the *Courrier français*, in its application to the Frank of Germanic race developing into an aristocrat, and the Gallo-roman developing into a bourgeois, he develops with ease in his *Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre*; where, in fact, the struggle between the Welsh, Saxon and Norman races, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, was evident and convincing. Also, his interest was predominant in the history of the Third Estate which, according to him, by its understanding with royalty, down to the seventeenth century, had made

France and prepared modern liberty. Even in his *Récits des temps mérovingiens*, what most interests him, in reality, is the antagonism between races. To be just to Thierry it should be added that his thesis gradually became less absolute (1).

**His Criticism.**—On the other hand, what was Thierry's value as a critic? We should not ask of him the scientific sureness of Fustel de Coulanges; but he was the first to insist upon the necessity of original documents, and he is guilty of nothing more than excessive confidence and enthusiasm. He is reproached for having too good-naturedly accepted the traditions and anecdotes in the *Roman de Rou*, in the works of Grégoire de Tours, Fortunatus, etc., and of having too readily believed in the authenticity of the old national Saxon songs, etc. This lack of criticalness mars his works from the historical point of view, in an age when everybody is so scrupulous concerning the authenticity of sources.

**Literary value.**—But, from the literary point of view, Thierry's work is of the first order. It has the best qualities of romanticism. Its narrative style is both simple and dramatic, impassioned and precise. Everything is living and highly coloured, without any exaggeration. Thierry was, in every sense of the word, an artist, whose honest and vigorous art will perhaps outlive that of Michelet (2).

#### IV. — DE BARANTE (1782-1866).

Of all those who wrote narrative history, simultaneously with Thierry, de Barante is the most illustrious. He published between 1824-26 his *Histoire des ducs de Bourgogne*. In his Preface de Barante explains that his object was to compose from naïve chronicles and original documents "a coherent, complete, exact narration, borrowing from them the interest which animates them, and supplying whatever they lacked." He says: "I have not, therefore, added any reflection, any judgment of my own upon the events I relate." As a motto he uses this definition of history by Quintilian: *Scribitur ad narrandum, non ad probandum*. So, while Thierry's history, though narrative, contains a system, de Barante's is only a narrative, a chronicle, in which the author effaces himself absolutely. De Barante should be praised for having chosen the best documents: Froissart, the monks of Saint-Denis, the chroniclers of the house of Burgundy, and for having drawn from them a new chronicle, which is very interesting to read. But this manner of writing history is too neutral; neither a

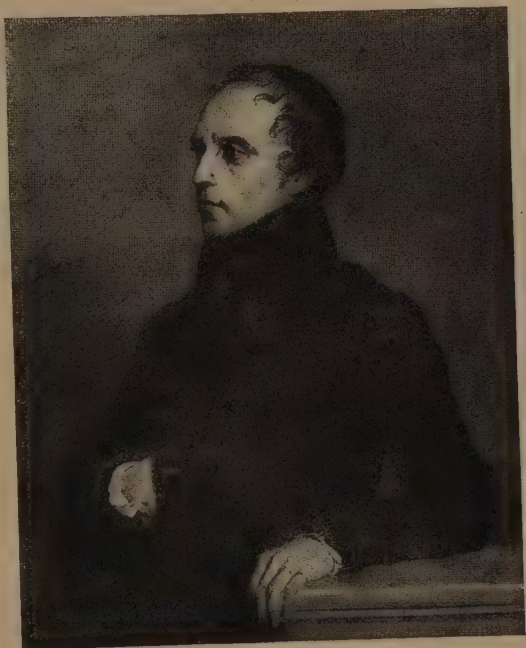
(1) Cf. C. JULLIAN, *Introduction*, pp. LVI-LVII.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 468; 2nd cycle, p. 1189.

philosopher, politician, moralist, or a savant, de Barante abdicates all the rights of the true historian.

## V. — GUIZOT (1787-1874.)

**Biography.**—Born at Nîmes, of a Protestant family, François Guizot was educated at Geneva, and came to Paris to study law in 1805. He began by writing articles, partly literary, philosophical or historical, in various newspapers, among others the *Publiciste*, edited by Suard. It was then that he met Mademoiselle de Meulan, whom he married in 1812. The same year he was appointed substitute professor for Lacretelle at the Sorbonne. In 1814 he became general secretary to the Minister of the Interior, and then Counsellor of State. After the fall of Decazes in 1820, he returned to his Sorbonne professorship, and made a study of the institutions of France; these lectures were interrupted in 1822, and only resumed in 1828 under the Martignac ministry. The Revolution of 1830 interrupted him again, and made him a politician. We shall speak elsewhere (1) of his career as an orator and minister.



GUIZOT

From the portrait painted by Paul Delaroche (1797-1856), engraved by Laugier.

His chief works, drawn largely from his Sorbonne lectures, are *Histoire du gouvernement représentatif* (1822), *Essais sur l'histoire de France* (1823), *Histoire de la Révolution d'Angleterre* (which appeared in three instalments from 1826 to 1856), *Histoire de la civilisation en Europe et en France depuis la chute de l'Empire romain* (1828-30), *Washington* (1841), *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de mon temps* (1858-1868).

(1) Cf. p. 839.

**His Method.**—Guizot, as a disciple of Montesquieu, and a liberal of the *école doctrinaire*, began by studying parliamentary institutions, particularly those of England. Then he applied himself to a search for the general laws and directing principles of civilisation, in order to follow the development of the rights of citizens in society. He sets forth three elements in civilisation in France : the Roman element, which explains the principle of authority and administrative organisation ; the Germanic element, which is that of individualism and independence ; and the Christian element, synonymous with equality and association. From the struggle, combination and fusion of these three elements modern civilisation was formed. Guizot is, then, a philosophical historian, one who probes the spirit of institutions, and who bases his work upon an exact and learned study of documents ; with him, as with Montesquieu, analysis precedes synthesis. Nobody was less of a utopian than this theorist upon civilisation.

**His Style.**—Perhaps Guizot neglects too much the picturesque and vivid portrayal of men and facts ; he is voluntarily sententious, and is indifferent as to whether he pleases or not. Nevertheless, his *Révolution d'Angleterre* is full of scenes and literary portraits (*Procès de Strafford, Cromwell et le Parlement, Mort de Cromwell*) ; and he sometimes draws oratorical parallels : namely Charlemagne and Napoleon (*Histoire de la civilisation*, vol. II, 20th lesson) ;—Cromwell, William III and Washington (*Conclusion du discours sur l'histoire de la Révolution d'Angleterre*). He is saved from an effect of coldness by his faith in religion and in liberalism, and by the deep though restrained ardour with which he pleads for his ideas (1).

## VI. — THIERS (1797-1877). — MIGNET (1796-1884).

**Biography.**—Adolphe Thiers was born at Marseilles ; his grandmother, a member of the Santi Lomaca family, a native of the Island of Cyprus, was a sister of André Chénier's mother. If ever the theory as to the influence of heredity and surroundings received a check, it was in the person of this historian without poetry, and this politician more *Normand* than *Marseillais*. After studying law at Aix, Thiers went to Paris in 1821, contributed some critical articles on art to the *Globe* and to the *Constitutionnel*, and worked on *L'Histoire de la Révolution*, which had been begun by Félix Bodin in 1823. The ten volumes of this important work — the first in which the chief recent events had been treated in their entirety and without party spirit—appeared from 1823 to 1827. Thiers, in association with Mignet and A. Carrel, founded *Le National* ; and the revolution of 1830 launched him also into politics. Leaving

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 475 ; 2nd cycle, p. 1200.



the ministry in 1843, he undertook *L'Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*, the twenty volumes of which were published from 1845 to 1863.

**His Method.**—Thiers brought to his historical work qualities of exactitude, honesty and intelligence which, without elevating him to the rank of Guizot and Michelet, assure him an eminent position. First, he strengthened his work marvellously well with documents. The archives of the departments of the Interior, of War, of Foreign Affairs, and of Finance, were freely at his service; and from them he obtained—especially for his second work—technical information of which he made methodical use. Furthermore, he visited the scenes where the most important events had taken place; he saw the battle-fields of the republican and Imperial armies, and he made their topography clear, not in the manner of a poet like Michelet describing Provence, but as a learned and conscientious geographer. He deals at the same time with both internal and external history. As a politician, he follows the correlation of financial, diplomatic and commercial affairs with those great deeds which usually are alone in drawing universal attention. All these diverse elements Thiers submitted to his intelligence, for, according to him, intelligence is the master quality of the historian (preface to his *Consulat et l'Empire*, vol. XII): the intelligence seeks, values, measures, groups, classes and organises; it guides and masters the imagination, and prevents errors and injustice.

**His Style.**—Thiers' style is clear and easy. The qualities which he possessed as a statesman, he also possessed in the highest degree as a writer. In reading him, one has the satisfaction of fully comprehending. One understands the battles of Austerlitz or of Eylau, as one understands the religious or financial policy of Napoleon. Finally, this clarity and accuracy are accompanied in Thiers, as in Guizot, by a certain intensity and communicativeness. If Guizot touches us by his faith, Thiers does so by his sincere patriotism. Under some of his sayings we feel a restrained enthusiasm or profound sorrow. However unlike Michelet, Thiers is more readable as a whole than in the quotation of a few fragments (1).

MIGNET must be mentioned along with Thiers. He was also a liberal journalist under the Restoration (*Courrier français*, *Le National*). He was appointed Counsellor of State, and director of the archives of Foreign Affairs by Louis-Philippe.—He published: *Antonio Pérez et Philippe II* (1845), *Marie Stuart* (1851), *Charles-Quint* (1854), *Rivalité de François I<sup>er</sup> et de Charles-Quint* (1875). Mignet's value lies in the documentary proof accompanying his historical studies. He is a master in the art of handling, grouping and examining sources. Choosing subjects of very limited scope, like Sallust, he could probe events and characters to the core. His style, while slightly monotonous in its seriousness, is characterised by a sustained vigour and a concision which is entirely Latin.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 480; 2nd cycle, p. 1209.

## VII. — MICHELET (1798-1874).

**Biography.** — An unhappy youth, which left him "the impression of a rough and laborious life," misfortunes and privations, and manual labour in the small printing-shop of a father half ruined by the laws of 1800 concerning printing :



MICHELET

From the lithograph by Foullion.

such were the difficulties which Jules Michelet had to struggle against, he who was "born of the people, and remained one of them." He was sustained, however, by a powerful will. He first attended the parish school, while working as compositor for his father, and in 1812 he entered the lycée Charlemagne, where he became a brilliant student. He renounced the École Normale, and accepted a position as private tutor in an institution in the Marais, whose students attended the Charlemagne lectures (1816). In 1819 he received his doctorate, in 1821 passed the *agrégation d'histoire*, and became a professor in the Sainte-Barbe college. It was then he composed his *Tableaux chronologiques d'histoire moderne*, and

translated the *Scienza nuova* by the Italian writer, Vico (1825). In 1826, he published his *Précis d'histoire moderne*, and in 1828, wrote his *Histoire romaine*, which was published in 1831. He had been appointed head-lecturer at the École Normale, and in 1831 he became chief of the historical division of the Archives.

This was the best period of his life. By dint of courage, devotion and labour, he had reached a brilliant and stable situation ; on one hand, he taught an elite of young men who were rather his disciples than his pupils ; and on the other hand, he had at his disposal a mass of documents to be classed and made use of. A liberal, he had nevertheless not been drawn into nor injured by active poli-

tics. The revolution of 1830 roused his enthusiasm without turning him aside from his real vocation. In short, it was under well-balanced, harmonious and impartial conditions that he began his *Histoire de France*, the first volume of which he published in 1838 and the sixth in 1844. Meanwhile, he had accepted the chair of history at the Collège de France in 1838.

The approach of the revolution of 1848 began, under the influence of Quinet and Mickiewicz, to trouble his peace. In 1846, he published *Le Livre du peuple*; and he realised that he could not have understood the history of absolute monarchy if he had not first studied the Revolution. He therefore stopped work on his *Histoire de France* at the reign of François I, and wrote his *Histoire de la Révolution*, from 1847 to 1853, a work of faith and propaganda rather than a work of science.—Everything contributed to upset his equilibrium. The coup d'État of 1851 deprived him of his professorship at the Collège de France, and of his position at the Archives. When he resumed his *Histoire de France* in 1855, he was angry with the monarchy because of the persecutions of Louis-Napoléon-Bonaparte; he had lost his serenity and sang-froid, and had only kept and exaggerated his qualities as a poet and visionary. The concluding volumes of his *Histoire de France* were published from 1855 to 1867. He then produced different descriptive and poetic works: *L'Oiseau*, *L'Insecte*, *La Mer*, *La Montagne*, etc. He died at Hyères in 1874.

**Works and Method.** — Michelet is an impassioned writer and it is difficult to judge him without passion. He should first be considered in his *Histoire romaine* and in the first six volumes of his *Histoire de France* in which he is altogether himself, not showing us yet the defects of his qualities, and in which his method is not disturbed by an over-excited sensibility. —He has himself given us his formula. For him, history should be the resurrection of the entire life of the past. He combined the methods of Thierry and Guizot: "This book," he said in 1833, "is a narrative and a system." In his first volume he studies the races which struggled for the possession of the soil of Gaul; and here, as M. G. Jullian says, we feel the influence of Thierry. In the second volume, Michelet is master of his own method. His intention is to establish the nature, both physical and moral, the geography both material and symbolical, of this France which was to be the scene of the evolution of such masses of humanity. This geographical study is celebrated, for its astonishing geological and descriptive accuracy, and for its striking romanticism of treatment (see especially *La Bretagne*, *L'Auvergne*, and *La Provence*). Michelet sets forth that each province has its own genius, which is incarnated in its great men.—Then he considers France as a being with a soul, developing herself by work on her own domain. He does not believe in attributing the formation of the country to any single element, nor to any clearly determined force. He analyses, one by one, the facts, the characters of great men, popular aspirations, manifestations

of public or private life, manners and morals, institutions, arts, letters; but he attributes the combination or crystallisation of these various elements to a mysterious force, the soul itself of France.—His *Histoire de France*, it will therefore be seen, contains reality, precision and also symbolism. If we examine it in each of its parts (art in the Middle Ages, Jeanne d'Arc), or in its entirety, it astonishes and charms us by its mixture of documentary solidity and poetry.—Let us add too, that Michelet himself shares, with touching sincerity, the noble sentiments he wishes to communicate to his readers. His sensibility (1), his love for the humble, his enchantment in the presence of Gothic art, his religious respect for Jeanne d'Arc, his anger against the Golden Calf and Satan, all make an epic poem of the first six volumes (as read in the first edition, for later Michelet often corrected his earliest text to bring it into harmony with the new spirit of the succeeding volumes)—So Michelet realised this “resurrection of the past” through documents, through symbols and through poetry.

In his *Révolution* and in the second part of his *Histoire de France*, Michelet certainly retains most of his merits. He still seeks the profound source of events in the social evolution of the poor and humble; he examines popular beliefs and hope; he is disquieted not only by the great events of the Revolution, but by the intimate life of those who were, at this period, neither executioners nor victims, he keeps his sense of the symbolic: his account of the taking of the Bastille, his portraits of Danton, Marat and Robespierre are all pages to be remembered. In the same way his study of the eighteenth century (which was for him the great century), is most curious to read, despite its evident prejudices. But it must be admitted that hasty generalisations and incoherent symbols abound in this portion of his work.

Michelet's style has all the virtues and also all the faults of romanticism. It is metaphorical, vivid, poetic; it is exaggerated, surcharged, sometimes “apocalyptic.” Michelet is one of the greatest of French writers—and one of the most unequal (2).

## VIII. — OTHER HISTORIANS.

**ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE** (1805–1859) is, after Guizot, the most illustrious of Montesquieu's disciples. In his *Démocratie en Amérique* (1836–1839), and in *l'Ancien régime et la Révolution* (1856), he analyses, with as much clear-sightedness as depth, the private life of modern society. No historian is more honest, better informed, or more powerful in his simplicity.

**HENRI MARTIN** (1810–1883) published in 19 volumes, from 1837–54, a *Histoire de France*, which is well supported by documents, impartial and pa-

(1) Read, in FAGUET's *Dix-neuvième siècle*, his chapter on Michelet's sensibility

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 486; 2nd cycle, p. 1224.



triotic. His chief originality lies in his search for, and at times proofs of the persistence of the Celtic element in France. His style is simple and as a writer he is a disciple of Thiers.

**EDGAR QUINET** (1803-1875), professor at the Collège de France, very well versed in German and Italian literature, published in 1848 his *Révolution d'Italie*, in 1862 *L'Histoire de la campagne de 1815*, and in 1865 *La Révolution*. This last philosophical and symbolic work is the one which gives the best idea of his original and poetic mind, in love with generous and dangerous theories, and always in vibration.

**LOUIS BLANC** (1812-1882), a journalist and politician, published from 1841 to 1846 his *Histoire de Dix ans* (directed against the July Monarchy), and during his exile, published in London, in 1862, his *Histoire de la Révolution française*. In substance as well as style, Louis Blanc is a pamphleteer.

**CAMILLE ROUSSET** (1821-1892) wrote in 1863 his *Histoire de Louvois*, was appointed historiographer to the War Office, and published works of special authority on military questions, notably his *Les Volontaires de 1791 à 1794* (1870), and *L'Histoire de la Guerre de Crimée* (1877).

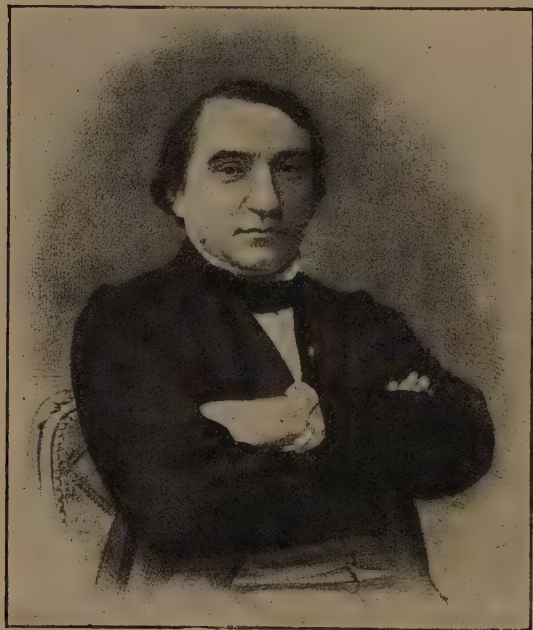
**TAINE** (1828-1893) is an historian, particularly in his *Origines de la France contemporaine*. This work consists of six volumes (8vo edition); Vol. I, *L'Ancien Régime*, in which Taine studies society, manners and morals, and makes an admirable systematic analysis of the classical spirit. Volumes II, III and IV are devoted to the Revolution (the Constituent Assembly, the Jacobin conquest). In this part we find literary portraits which undoubtedly may be called arbitrary, but are worthy of Saint-Simon, especially those of Danton, Marat and Robespierre.—Finally, the last two volumes, *Le Régime moderne*, show us the results of the Revolution. Here Taine deals with Bonaparte, of whom he draws an ironical and ill-natured portrait.—Strong in documents, impassioned but self-controlled, always true in detail but open to discussion, this work on the whole is written with rare mastery. Never has Taine's style shown more vigour and variety (1).

**FUSTEL DE COULANGES** (1830-1889) a professor at the Ecole Normale and the Sorbonne, is considered the most complete representative of the scientific spirit in history. *La Cité antique* (1864) won him European notoriety. In 1874, he published the first volume of his *Institutions politiques de l'ancienne France*, which he went on with till 1888, but the final volume did not appear until after his death. De Coulanges held that history is a "pure science." "It consists," he says, "in stating facts, analysing them, and comparing them

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1252. On Taine, as a critic, cf. p. 8.6.

in order to point out their relationship. It is possible, doubtless, that a philosophy may be disengaged from this scientific history; but it must evolve naturally, of itself, and almost independently of the will of the historian..." Fustel is the master of the entire modern historical school. His life was that of a savant and a sage, and his personal character was as estimable as his work (1).

**RENAN** (1823-1892). — Through his work in religious exegesis, Renan was



RENAN IN 1854  
From a photograph.

led into writing history. He published, from 1863-1885, the *Histoire des origines du Christianisme*, in eight volumes, (the first of which is the *Vie de Jésus*), and the *Histoire du peuple d'Israël*, in five volumes, from 1887 to 1891. Renan was well grounded in ancient and modern sources; he knew Hebrew and Syriac; he had travelled in the countries he describes, and he brought to the interpretation of documents a mind which was curious, serene, sensitive, fine and poetic. His imagination and his scepticism sometimes caused him to accept fascinating and disputable hypotheses as certitudes, and already his works have no scientific value. But the admixture of these contradictory qualities gives him a strange

charm; his writings evoke at times a somewhat disquieting philosophy and an impression of "learned naïveté" which is unique in the nineteenth century (2).

**V. DURUY** (1811-1894) is famous for the eminent services he rendered, while minister, to the system of education in the lycées and Facultés. As a historian, Duruy published his *Histoire des Romains* (1843-1885), and his *His-*

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1235.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1241.

*toire des Grecs* (1887). With profound and sure learning, Duruy writes in a lively and easy style, temperate and energetic, often eloquent and emotional.

**A. SOREL** (1842-1906) published numerous works on diplomatic history, the most remarkable of which is *l'Europe et la Révolution française* (four volumes, 1885-1892). His use of documents is minute and scientific; his ideas remind us of the school of Guizot and de Tocqueville. He writes in a style of classic purity.

Among contemporary historians should also be noted: **Chéruel** (1809-1891): *Histoire de France sous le ministère de Mazarin* (1883).— **A. Vandal** (1853-1910): *Napoléon et Alexandre I<sup>er</sup>* (1891-1893); *l'Avènement de Bonaparte* (1902); — **Henri Houssaye** (1848-1911), who wrote a series of strongly documented, and very lifelike studies of the Empire: 1807, 1812, 1814, 1815, *Waterloo*.

We give the names only of the most illustrious of the historians who are dead, and whose works seem to be already classified. At the present time historical work is represented by writers and masters such as **Ernest Lavisse**, **Hanotaux**, **Chuquet**, etc.

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ROMANICIST PAGE ORNAMENT  
 Designed by Georges Blanke.



THE PARIS BAR IN 1835  
Ornamental frieze of the romanticist epoch.

## CHAPTER IX.

### ORATORS AND POLITICAL WRITERS. JOURNALISTS.

#### SUMMARY

1° **UNDER THE RESTORATION**, political eloquence again enjoyed comparative liberty. The outstanding parliamentary orators were : **VILLELE**, very clear in the discussion of affairs ; **ROYER-COLLARD**, chief of the *doctrinaires*, a serious and vehement speaker ; **BENJAMIN CONSTANT**, a liberal, with clever and supple talent ; **GÉNÉRAL FOY**, an orator inspired by warm liberal and patriotic convictions ; **CHATEAUBRIAND**, etc.— **PAUL-LOUIS COURIER** wrote sarcastic pamphlets in a concise and *Attic* style.

2° **UNDER LOUIS-PHILIPPE** : **CASIMIR PÉRIER** brought to the tribune much firmness and honesty ; **GUIZOT** was methodical and haughty ; **BERRYER** was a lawyer, ardent and enthusiastic ; **MONTALEMBERT** spoke with a warmth which never excluded elegance ; **THIERS** was intelligent and clear ; **LAMARTINE** was a poet even in his speeches, but by no means lacking in political views.

3° **FROM 1848 TO OUR TIME** : **VICTOR HUGO** possessed an oratorical style, but rather exaggerated ; **JULES FAVRE** was sarcastic and precise ; **GAMBETTA** was a demagogue endowed with a natural and impassioned eloquence.

4° **JOURNALISTS** : **ARMAND CARREL** founded in 1830 *Le National* ; he was a born writer, who treated political questions seriously, but whose premature death prevented him from giving the full measure of his gifts ; **EMILE DE GIRARDIN** founded *La Presse* in 1836 ; he was the type of the man of action, " who has a new idea daily ; " **LOUIS VEUILLLOT** wrote violent polemical articles in *L'Univers*, in a style as remarkable for correctness as for strength.



## I. — PARLIAMENTARY ELOQUENCE AND PAMPHLETS UNDER THE RESTORATION.



DECORATED LETTER  
of the end of the XIX century.

THE Restoration brought back some political liberty to France, which 1830 too often causes us to forget. From the year 1815, parliamentary debates, suppressed under the Empire, took on a breadth and vivacity unknown since the Revolution. Among the very numerous orators who distinguished themselves between 1815 and 1830, and who immediately caused the young French tribune to equal that of England, we must mention : On the royalist side, *De Villèle*, *La Bourdonnais*, *Lainé* and *Martignac* ; on the side of the liberals : *Royer-Collard*, *Benjamin Constant*, *Camille Jordan*, *De Serre*, *Manuel*, *Général Foy*, etc. In a class apart, *Chateaubriand*. We shall characterise only the principal ones.

**VILLÈLE** (1773-1834). Deputy for Toulouse in 1815, Count Joseph de Villèle became minister of Finance in 1821 and Prime Minister in 1822. His reputation is that of a too absolute politician, under whose administration the most disputable laws drawn up under the Restoration were voted, and who caused the unpopular Spanish expedition. But it must be remembered also that Villèle was an orator of the first order on affairs. As a deputy and minister he delivered closely-knit clear speeches, at times animated by oratorical beauty (on the budget of 1816, the war with Spain, 1823, the indemnity to the *émigrés*, 1825, etc.) (1).

**MARTIGNAC** (1778-1832) was a deputy for Bordeaux, and succeeded Villèle as minister in 1828. An elegant but excitable orator, a type of the aristocratic Girondin, he distinguished himself especially in the debates on the law concerning the press, in June, 1828 ; and on August 7, 1830, he entered a generous protest in favour of Charles X, accused of " ferocity " (2).

**ROYER COLLARD** (1763-1845). — He had been, in 1797, a member of the *Conseil des Cinq-Cents*, and became an eminent professor of philosophy at the Sorbonne under the Empire. Elected deputy in 1815, he was the most formidable enemy of the Villèle ministry. He remained a deputy until 1843. — In politics, Royer-Collard was the chief of the doctrinaires, and Guizot was his

(1) A. CHABRIER, *Les Orateurs politiques*, p. 468 ; J. REINACH, *Le Conciones français*, p. 104.

(2) A. CHABRIER, p. 546 ; J. REINACH, p. 134.

best pupil. He was a legitimist, and resolutely against popular government; but he was also opposed to all absolute or aristocratic sovereignty. He represents the parliamentarians or "légistes" of the old régime.—His discourses, constructed with a method which reveals the professor, are animated by powerful dialectics founded on generous conviction. The most remarkable were



THE EXPULSION OF MANUEL FROM THE CHAMBRE DES DÉPUTÉS

*From a contemporary lithograph*

On the left, Mercier, sergeant of the National Guard, refuses to forward the orders of his lieutenant to his men. At the back the constables are about to lay hold of the refractory deputy.

devoted to: *L'Inamovibilité de la magistrature* (1815), and to *La Liberté de la presse* (1815, 1822 and 1827) (4).

**BENJAMIN CONSTANT** (1767-1830).—Exiled under the Empire, Benjamin Constant returned to France with the Restoration of 1814. During the Hundred Days, he rallied to Napoleon, and wrote for him the *Acte additionnel*. At first banished by Louis XVIII in 1815, he was recalled the following year and elected deputy, and joined the liberal constitutional opposition. He was a fine

(1) A. CHABRIER, pp. 416-533; J. REINACH, p. 94.

orator, master of incisive and piquant language, and never declamatory. It is difficult to mention any special one of his speeches, for there was not one great political question, from 1817 to 1830, in which he did not intervene, and always in a vigorous and direct manner. We may cite, however, his discourses on the *Loi électorale* in 1820, on the *Cocarde tricolore* in 1821; and his active participation in the discussion of the laws on the press, in 1822-1827 (1).

**DE SERRE** (1776-1824) was a magistrate under the Empire, elected deputy for the Haut-Rhin in 1815, president of the Chamber in 1817, and Minister of Justice in 1818 and in 1820. A moderate, constitutional royalist, like Decazes and Richelieu, he distinguished himself by his judicious and often impassioned opposition to the projected laws of the ultra party. On the questions of Finance in 1816 and the Press in 1819, he delivered excellent speeches. Contrary to the custom of the greater part of his colleagues, who spoke from written discourses, de Serre improvised; he began laboriously, but warmed up little by little, and made an impression of natural eloquence (2).

**MANUEL** (1775-1827), a very ardent liberal, is especially known by his discourse on the Spanish expedition (1823), which caused his expulsion from the Chamber, where he had already more than once aroused the anger of his adversaries by the violence of his language (3).

**GÉNÉRAL FOY** (1775-1825). — A soldier under the Empire, elected deputy in 1819, Général Foy represented in the Chamber that form of liberalism which held the Restoration responsible for a misunderstanding of the glories of the Empire, and which, very soon excited by poets like Victor Hugo, prepared the advent of the Second Empire. General Foy spoke brilliantly and ardently not only upon military questions but under every circumstance. We may mention his discourses on the *Loi électorale* (1817), on the *Cocarde tricolore* (1821), *l'Armée française*, apropos of a law for taking away their pensions from the soldiers of the Empire (1821), on the *Guerre d'Espagne* (1823), on *Le Milliard d'indemnité* (1825). He was one of the orators most highly esteemed by public opinion for character as well as talent. In 1825 he was given a grandiose funeral (4).

**CHATEAUBRIAND** (1768-1848). — There are two aspects to the political life of Chateaubriand. A Peer of France, plenipotentiary to the Congress of Verona, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Villèle cabinet, he upheld his opinions with serene and dogmatic pride. In June, 1824, he resigned from the

(1) A. CHABRIER, pp. 446-460; J. REINACH, p. 109. On B. Constant, as a Novelist, cf. p. 865.

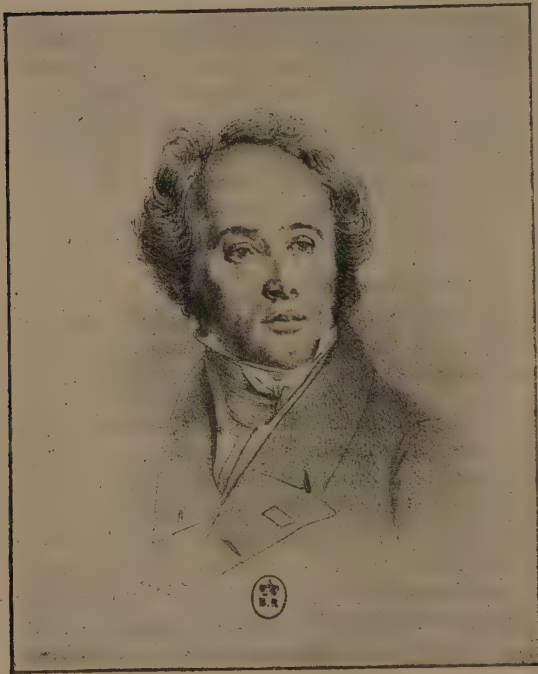
(2) A. CHABRIER, pp. 400, 404, 429; J. REINACH, p. 113.

(3) A. CHABRIER, pp. 457, 462, 490; J. REINACH, p. 122.

(4) A. CHABRIER, pp. 437, 459, 463, 482, 524; J. REINACH, p. 118. Read, in VILLEMAIN'S *Souvenirs contemporains* (I, 387), the article entitled *Démosthène et le Général Foy*.

ministry, and from that time led a lively opposition to Villèle and his successors. In 1840, to save the Bourbon monarchy, he proposed acceptance of the abdication of Charles X in favour of the Duke de Bordeaux. It was then he delivered his finest speech (1).

**PAUL-LOUIS COURIER** (1772-1825). — Courier was not an orator, but



GÉNÉRAL FOY IN 1823

From the lithograph by Achille Déveria (1800-1857).

should be classed with those who contributed to the overthrow of the Restoration. He had at first been an officer; but he did not like military life, and his letters show him more anxious to examine the libraries and museums of Italy than to acquire military glory. He was, in fact, a scholar and a delicate man. A zealous Hellenist, he translated in an archaic style worthy of Amyot, Longus' pastoral, *Daphnis et Chloe*. Resigning his commission in 1809, he afterwards lived on his estate at Vêretz, in Touraine, and became, like Béranger, the unconquerable adversary of the legitimist party. His most famous pamphlets are: *Simple discours de Paul-Louis, vigneron de la Chavonnière, aux membres de la commune de Vêretz, à l'occasion d'une souscription pour*

*l'acquisition de Chambord* (this was a project for buying the château de Chambord for the Duke de Bordeaux), 1821;—*Pétition pour des villageois qu'on empêche de danser* (1822);—*Pamphlet des pamphlets* (1824). He also wrote literary pamphlets: *Lettre à M. Renouard, libraire, sur une tache faite à un manuscrit de Florence* (1810).—(Courier had dropped some ink on a Longus MS., and had been accused of wanting to deteriorate the passage, then unpublished, so that no one could read it after himself);—*Lettres à MM. de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles*

(1) A. CHABRIER, p. 547; J. REINACH, p. 138.



*lettres* (1819).—Courier had presented himself as Hellenist to the Academy of Inscriptions, and had not won a single vote. He attributed this exclusion to his political ideas.—His Correspondence (from 1787-1812) contains a number of interesting letters, a few of which are justly celebrated, as for instance, the letter upon the proclamation of the Empire, and the letter entitled *Une Aventure en Calabre*. All of them are worth reading (1).

Courier's arguments, in his pamphlets, are powerful, witty and sophisticated. Somewhat too laboured, his style makes an impression of precision and firmness, as well as of fancifulness and grace. It has a curious rhythm, as if it were blank verse.

## II. — UNDER THE JULY MONARCHY.

From 1830 to 1848, the most celebrated parliamentary orators were: *Duke Victor de Broglie, Casimir Périer, Guizot, Berryer, Montalembert, Thiers, Molé, Rémusat, Dufaure, Lamartine*, etc. We shall only study the most remarkable among them.

**CASIMIR PÉRIER** (1777-1832). — Périer was an officer in 1799, then a banker, a deputy in 1817, and a liberal under the Restoration; and after July, 1830, he was elected president of the Chamber. He became Premier on March 13, 1831, on the fall of the Lafitte cabinet, under circumstances of particular difficulty. The object was, in fact, to inaugurate a policy of resistance to those who prolonged the revolution to which Louis-Philippe owed his throne, and who said, with Mauguin and Lafayette, that 1830 had been the coronation of the people. During more than a year, and until May 16, 1832, (when he died of cholera), Casimir Périer fulfilled the mission with which he was entrusted with rare firmness of character and a plain robust eloquence. His successors, Thiers, Guizot, Broglie, etc., had only to carry on his work (2).

**THE DUKE DE BROGLIE** (1785-1870), was the son-in-law of Mme de Staël. As peer of France he represented, under the Restoration, monarchical liberalism. Minister of Public Instruction and of Foreign Affairs under Louis-Philippe, it was then that he played his most important role. After the Fieschi outrage in July, 1835, he asked the Chamber to vote the *loi de septembre*, which he explained and defended in several lofty discourses. He intervened efficiently also in the abolition of negro slavery. He was a deputy in the Assembly of 1848, but he retired from political life after the coup d'État of 1851 (3).

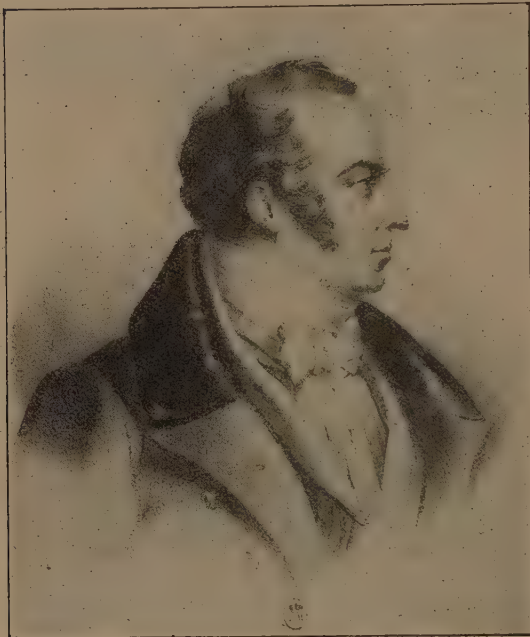
**GUIZOT** (1787-1874). — We have already dealt with Guizot in the chapter

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 545; 2nd cycle, p. 1251.

(2) PELLISSON, p. 1; J. REINACH, p. 144.

(3) PELLISSON, *Les Orateurs politiques de la France de 1830 à nos jours*, p. 35 J. REINACH, p. 149.

on historians (1). His political career did not begin until 1830, when he was returned to the Chamber, and signed the address of the "221" against the *Ordonnances*. Minister of Public Instruction in 1830 and 1832, he framed the Bill on primary teaching; he was later ambassador to London, Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1840 to 48, and exercised a preponderating influence on domestic politics. But by his harshness as a doctrinaire, and by his inflexible resistance to the advanced parties, he slowly prepared the fall of the monarchy. After 1848 he was not re-elected, but, feeling confident that he had governed for the best, he wrote, in nine volumes, his *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de son temps* (1858-1868). Convinced that government ought to belong to the middle classes, Guizot endeavoured to confront his adversaries both of the Liberal and Conservative parties, which resulted in the lofty tone of moderation, the defensive attitude, the somewhat banal and solemn formulas which are the external characteristics of his eloquence. But his eloquence is, nevertheless, substantial, chiefly because



BERRYER

From the lithograph by Pidoux.

Guizot's ideas rested on historical foundations, and because he was not a second-hand politician, or a lawyer whom ambition or combative temperament had led into the political arena. In reading his address on *L'Hérédité de la pairie* (1831), on *L'Enseignement primaire* (1833), on the question of the *Régence* (1842) and on *La Réforme électorale* (1847), if we compare his arguments with those of Thiers or Odilon Barrot, we feel that this parliamentarian was also a philosopher and an historian and that, whatever may have been the result of his politics, he was an honour to France (2).

(1) Cf. p. 825.

(2) PELLISSON, pp. 17, 28, 52, 134, 170, 182; J. REINACH, p. 159.

**BERRYER** (1790-1868), the son of a lawyer, became a member of the Bar himself, and under the Restoration defended Generals Ney and Cambronne. He was deputy in 1830, and one of the leaders of the opposition to the dynasty under the July government. An honest and convinced legitimist, he always enjoyed the admiration and respect of his adversaries. He gave up politics after 1831, but resumed his political career in 1863; and, as deputy in the *Corps législatif*, he opposed the second Empire. With his rich talent, superb voice, energetic gestures, his eloquence and pathos, Berryer was rather an advocate than a parliamentary orator. But his discourses on *L'Hérédité de la pairie* (1831) are still read with interest, as well as those directed against the *Disjonction* (1837), against the Molé Cabinet (1839), on the Oriental question (1840), the *Révision de la Constitution* (1851). The fervidness of these speeches has not even now altogether cooled (1).

**MONTALEMBERT** (1810-1870).—A contributor to *L'Avenir* in 1834, Montalembert became from that time the champion of liberty in education. He opened a school on May 9, 1831, without the authorisation of the University, which then possessed the monopoly of teaching. This school was closed in the name of the law, and Montalembert was taken before the court with his accomplices, Lacordaire and de Caux, accused of a misdemeanour. Meanwhile Montalembert's father having died, his son succeeded to his title, still hereditary; and it was as a peer of France before the High Court that the young man had to appear and answer the accusation. This first speech—only published in 1844—reveals an admirable oratorical temperament. After separating from Lamennais, Montalembert became leader of the liberal Catholic party in the upper Chamber from 1835 to 1848. He took part in all the great political and social debates, protested against the oppressive legislation in Poland and Ireland, and worked above all for liberty of teaching (1844). Montalembert was a member of the National Assembly of 1848, and of the *Corps législatif* of the Second Empire from 1852 to 1857. He was a born orator; like Lamartine, he had an elegant and ready flow of words, and like Berryer, he was full of fire and enthusiasm, while he was master of a more natural style than either of them. (2).

**THIERS** (1797-1877) (3).—Thiers entered politics in 1830. Under Louis-Philippe, he was Under-Secretary of State in the department of Finance, Minister of the Interior, of Public Works and of Foreign Affairs. A Member of the National Assembly in 1848, he retired in 1851, and only reappeared in the Chamber in 1863. President of the Republic in 1871, he resigned in 1873.—

(1) PELLISSON, pp. 24, 66, 99; J. REINACH, p. 197.

(2) PELLISSON, p. 163; J. REINACH, p. 249.

(3) On THIERS, as a historian, cf. p. 826.

Thiers was an « avocat d'affaires », a business man ; we feel while reading him that he does not make a speech, he talks ; he has thoroughly prepared the technical part of his subject, understands it, and explains it, producing in the highest degree an impression of clearness. He does not trouble himself



LAMARTINE AT THE HOTEL DE VILLE IN 1849  
From a drawing by Lacauchie, engraved by Rebel.

with theories or ideas in general ; he concentrates on the question in hand, and draws practical conclusions. Among his many discourses, we should mention : *L'Hérédité de la pairie* (1831), *La Question d'Orient* (1840) ; *Les Chemins de fer* (1842), *Les Fortifications de Paris* (1842) ; *Les Libertés nécessaires à la France* (1864) ; *L'Etablissement de la République* (1873), etc. The eloquence of Thiers loses in reading his individual speeches ; it is true of him more than of any other parliamentary orator, that his speeches must be read in the *Moniteur*, with all the interruptions and retorts. Then his eloquence is truly vivid (1).

**LAMARTINE** (1791-1869) (2).—A deputy from 1834 to 1848, a member and leader of the Provisionary Government, Lamartine had said on his entry into the

Chamber : " My seat shall be near the ceiling," meaning, above all the parties. From the beginning he assumed an independent position, and, though always on the breach, was never a partisan. He was therefore accused of having held cloudy and chimerical political ideas. But, on reading his speeches, one is surprised, on the contrary, to find such clear-sightedness on technical as well as

(1) PELLISSON, pp. 78, 93, 120, etc. ; J. REINACH, p. 170.

(2) On LAMARTINE, as a lyric poet, cf. p. 738.



on general questions; whether he speaks on the *Question d'Orient* (1840), on the *Fortifications de Paris* (1842), on the *Chemins de fer* (1842), on the *Retour des cendres de Napoléon* (1842), on *La Politique du Gouvernement provisoire* (1848), etc., his views are true and often prophetic. He clothes his ideas in a simple and harmonious style which, when read, generally appears slightly diffuse, but which also abounds in concise and ingenious formulas. His improvised speech to the people at the Hôtel de Ville in 1849, on the tri-colour and the red flag, is as fine as a passage from Demosthenes or the Gracchi (1).

### III.—FROM 1848 TO OUR TIME.

Several orators, already famous under the July Monarchy, continued to hold first rank during the Second Republic, the Second Empire and the Third Republic. To those already named, we should add: *Odilon-Barrot*, *Ledru-Rollin*, *Falloux*, *Victor Hugo*, *Jules Favre*, *Emile Ollivier*, *Rouher*, *Jules Simon*, *Gambetta*, *Buffet*, *J. Ferry*, etc.

**VICTOR HUGO** (1802-1885) is not comparable to Lamartine as a political orator, for which he had no natural gift. Besides the fact that he read his discourses, and that interruptions—which are stimulating to the true orator—disconcerted him, his style, full of antitheses and grandiloquence, was frequently too rhetorical for the subject under discussion. However, he spoke upon *Liberty of Teaching and the Suffrage* (1850) in a vehement and often successful manner. He collected, in *Actes et Paroles*, his numerous discourses delivered in the Upper Chamber, the Assembly of 1848, that of 1871, and in the Senate (1876-1885) but frequently altered the text (2).

**JULES FAVRE** (1809-1890). —Already well known as a lawyer, Favre was a deputy in 1848 and 1849. Reelected in 1858, he played an important part in the



VICTOR HUGO AS A THINKER  
From a caricature by Daumier (1808-1879).

(1) PELLISSON, pp. 41, 61, 81, 88, etc.; J. REINACH, p. 218.

(2) PELLISSON, pp. 253, 363; J. REINACH, p. 255.—On V. Hugo, as a lyric poet, cf. p. 745.

government of National Defense as Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was elected senator in 1876. His discourses are, like those of Berryer, real barrister's pleas. Favre was less enthusiastic than Berryer, but his arguments were stronger, and by urgent questions he tired out his adversaries. We may note his discourses on *L'Expédition de Rome* (1849), on *La Guerre du Mexique* (1862) and on *La Candidature officielle* (1864), (1).

**GAMBETTA** (1838-1882).—Gambetta made his reputation as a lawyer by his defence in 1858 of Delescluze, editor of the journal *Le Réveil*, who was prosecuted for having opened a subscription for a monument to Baudin, the famous deputy killed on December 3, 1851, on the barricades. The following year Gambetta was elected deputy, and actively opposed the Empire. After Sedan he became a member of the government of the National Defence, and was one of the most active reorganisers of the army. He was President of the Chamber in 1879 and Prime Minister in 1881, but he could not maintain his position, and died prematurely. He was one of the finest orators in France since Mirabeau; he was born to be a speaker, to express general political ideas, and above all political commonplaces, in clear and sonorous sentences. His gestures, voice, carriage, all combined to produce the effect made by this orator, who was more a demagogue than a statesman. When we read his speeches in a book, or even in *L'Officiel*, they appear redundant and hollow; certainly, they are not the speeches of a Demosthenes or a Mirabeau, nor even of a Lamartine. But those who had "heard the lion roar" retained an unforgettable impression.—We may note his discourses on *Le Plébiscite* (April, 1872), *Aux Alsaciens* (1872), the Thonon discourse (1872), the Cherbourg speech (1875), and the Romans discourse (1878) (2).

#### IV.—GREAT JOURNALISTS.

Most of the orators whom we have just studied were also journalists, such as Benjamin Constant, Chateaubriand, Thiers, etc. To these we must add the following names:

**CH. DE RÉMUSAT** (1797-1875).—Before 1830, he contributed to *Le Globe* and *La Revue française* some remarkably perspicuous articles, and became a liberal politician under Louis-Philippe. He was still Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1871.

**ARMAND CARREL** (1800-1836) founded, with Thiers and Mignet, *Le National* in 1830. For six years, he worked on propaganda for the Republic,

(1) PELLISSON, pp. 242, 279, 321, 336; J. REINACH, p. 269.

(2) PELLISSON, pp. 370, 389, 410; J. REINACH, pp. 304, 383.

which seemed to him the logical consequence of the revolution of July; he would have given France the same institutions as those of the United States. His articles in *Le National*, the best of which have been collected in a volume, reveal him as an excellent writer in a style worthy to be a model, for its sincerity, firmness and correctness. Armand Carrel was killed in a duel by Emile de Girardin.

### ÉMILE DE GIRARDIN

(1802-1881) was the type of journalist who has "a daily idea," who amuses the public and is himself amused by it. He had more imitators than Carrel. Among his most fruitful "ideas" was the diminution of the price of newspapers, thanks to the advertisements. He founded *La Presse* in 1836, and it became one of the best informed and most literary of the newspapers, numbering among its contributors such men as Alexandre Dumas, F. Soulié, Théophile Gautier, Méry, etc. His wife, born Delphine Gay, who was well known for her poetry and a few plays (*Lady Tartuffe*, *L'École des Journalistes*, *La Joie fait peur*, etc.) contributed to the *Presse* under the pseudonym of Vicomte de Launay.



LOUIS VEILLOT

From a photograph.

**PRÉVOST-PARADOL** (1829-1870), who also might have been mentioned among the historians and moralists, was, in the *Courrier du dimanche* and the *Débats*, a courteous but formidable adversary of the second Empire.

**LOUIS VEILLOT** (1813-1883) is best known for his articles in the catholic journal, *L'Univers*, in which he violently opposed all parties. We shall not

deal here with his political career; but as a pamphleteer and writer Veillot had genius. His vocabulary is both very rich and very French; his style, brisk and vivid in its variety, is superior to the fine, dry precision of Courier; and in his correspondence he is as simple and delicate as he is ardent and eloquent in his articles and books (1).

Contemporary journalism, which absorbed and spoiled a number of distinguished talents, includes no other name equal to the foregoing, outside the domain of criticism, of which we speak elsewhere.

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(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 573; 2nd cycle, p. 1257.





THE CHARIOT OF THESPIS

## CHAPTER X.

# COMEDY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

### SUMMARY

1° **SCRIBE** (1791-1861) produced four hundred plays between 1810 and 1861; he began with the vaudeville in one act, and then wrote comedies in five acts.—He was a witty observer of the fashions and manners of his time, and especially a clever constructor of plots.—He excelled in avoiding all the painful aspects of his subjects. His best pieces are **historical comedies** (*Bertrand et Raton*; *Le Verre d'eau*). Between 1830 and 1848 a crowd of authors handled serious and bold subjects, and were precursors of Augier and Dumas  *fils*.

2° **ÉMILE AUGIER** (1820-1889) set up as the champion of morals and the family. He upheld bourgeois theses in *Gabrielle*, *Ceinture dorée*, *Les Lionnes pauvres*, etc. He introduced politics into *Le Fils de Giboyer*, and the influence of Dumas  *fils* is felt in *Les Fourchambault*.—His two masterpieces are *Le Gendre de M. Poirier* (1854) and *Maître Guérin* (1864). His style is incisive and firm and sometimes too witty.

3° **ALEXANDRE DUMAS fils** (1824-1895), wrote his plays to illustrate generous but paradoxical themes, particularly marriage and divorce (*Les Idées de Mme Aubray*, *La Princesse Georges*, *La Femme de Claude*, *L'Étrangère*, *Denise*). He made the stage into a tribune, but he was the son of his father, and his subjects, if not his form, have dramatic quality; his characters reason too much, and indulge too freely in witticisms.

4° **LABICHE** excelled in the vaudeville, into which he often introduced a penetrating philosophy (*Le Voyage de M. Perrichon*, 1860); **VICTORIEN SARDOU** is the most distinguished of Scribe's disciples; he succeeded best in historical comedy, and attained to greatness in a few dramas (*Patrie*, 1869).—

ED. PAILLERON presents a piquant picture of *précieuse* society in the nineteenth century (*Le Monde où l'on s'ennuie*, 1881.)

5° THE "THÉÂTRE LIBRE" (1887-1895) staged realistic plays, and revealed a few vigorous dramatic temperaments (ANCEY, FABRE, CÉARD).—A reaction took place in the direction of idealistic and poetic plays with EDMOND ROSTAND (*Cyrano de Bergerac*, 1897).



DECORATED LETTER

taken from *Paul et Virginie*,  
Curmer edition, 1853.

COMEDY, in the nineteenth century, was no longer a distinct genre, entirely different from tragedy or drama; it admitted of all sorts of subjects, characters, conditions and treatment. It may be said that it differed from the romantic drama only in the denouement, not because the comedy denouement was always happy or gay, but because in general it avoided violent deaths. Even the name "comedy" seemed, to a few authors, to be too limited, at the end of the nineteenth century; and they "wrote simply plays". However, the genres and other species of compositions cannot react on one another or be completely intermingled. We see still surviving: the vaudeville, the comedy of manners (in verse or prose), the problem comedy, the historical comedy, burlesque comedy, "hack" comedy. All the plays of which we shall now speak, from Scribe to Sardou and Rostand, may be classified more or less accurately under one of these heads.

## I. — SCRIBE (1791-1861).

Between 1810 and 1861, Scribe wrote nearly four hundred plays. He occupied the Paris stages for fifty years, and his works have only disappeared slowly and gradually from the repertory. No French writer has been more often translated and represented in foreign countries.

His beginnings were not successful, but he possessed a real dramatic gift; and in 1815 he was applauded at the Vaudeville theatre for his *Une Nuit de la garde nationale*, which was followed by charming and vivid short plays such as *Le Solliciteur*, *L'Ours et le Pacha*, etc. When the Gymnase (Théâtre de Madame) was opened in 1820, Scribe became the official playwright for this stage where only one-act plays were to be presented, and this resulted in the numberless vaudevilles in which he handled his subjects with such conciseness and sureness of touch: *Le plus beau jour de la vie*; *La Demoiselle à marier*, *Le Charlatanisme*, *La Manie des places*, etc. Later on Scribe made some great comedies out of these one act plays; and fortunately the necessity for concentrating his

action and vividly sketching his characters in his vaudevilles had trained his hand.—Meanwhile, his play *Valérie* had been accepted by the Théâtre-Français in 1822; and later on the following were also produced there: *Le Mariage d'argent* (1827), *Bertrand et Raton* (1833), *La Camaraderie* (1837), *La Calomnie* (1840), *Le Verre d'eau* (1840), *Une chaîne* (1841), etc.—After 1823, Scribe wrote with equal success opera and comic-opera libretti: *La Dame Blanche* (1825), *La Muette de Portici* (1828), *Robert le Diable* (1831), *La Juive* (1835), *Les Huguenots* (1836), etc.

We must not expect of Scribe either profound psychology or real style; his chief object was a well-constructed plot, and in this he excelled. The spectator feels complete satisfaction in following his plot, and a sort of disappointment when the play is over. Scribe's subjects are often bold or dangerous; but he plays with the difficulty, and seems to be turning all around the subject without touching it, as if for a wager, like an acrobat dancing over swords: in this respect his masterpiece is *Une Chaîne*.

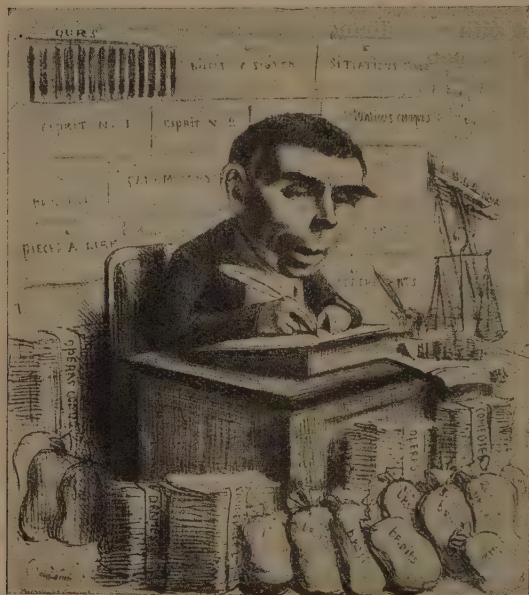
However, Scribe's plays are not devoid of observation and moral significance. In his vaudevilles he has left us a gallery of exact and interesting sketches: the National Guardsman, the old soldier of the Empire, the fashionable and frisky officer of the Restoration, the charlatan journalist, prototype of Emile de Girardin and J. Janin, the upstart merchant, the notary, the clerk. All these characters are alive; costumes, actions, hobbies, language have all been copied from nature. And it was no mean achievement, this renovation of the characters of the comedy of manners, after the everlasting imitations of Molière, Regnard, Dancourt and Beaumarchais by Picard, Duval and a host of others.—Scribe sometimes does even better. Poligny in the *Mariage d'argent* is the type of the ambitious young man formed by the new manners (4). In *La Camaraderie* (which might be called as well *Les Arrivistes*), we find all Pailleron's types of actors, more spiritedly portrayed. In *La Calomnie*, the political characters are drawn with wit and accuracy.—*Bertrand et Raton* and *Le Verre d'eau* are models of historical comedy, in the superficial and shrewd manner for which Sardou became famous. Even Dumas père, that great inventor, was in this genre only an imitator of Scribe.

Scribe had a number of collaborators, who always praised his honesty and good faith. "I have written twelve or fifteen vaudevilles in collaboration with Scribe," said Carmouche, "and I can honestly say that in all these pieces there is not a word of mine." Usually his collaborators brought him "grandes machines" more or less melodramatic, from which he extracted a few scenes, transposed the subject, concentrated the whole, and re-wrote the play from beginning to end. But the "collaborator," all the same, received half the royalty (2).

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1261.

(2) It should be remembered in this connection that existing legislation on the rights of authors is due to Scribe. He made a large fortune, but his philanthropy was famous.

**Contemporaries of Scribe.**—Between 1815 and 1848 numerous comedies were produced. We shall merely notice the chief plays, especially to bring out the boldness of some of their subjects.—The “ money question ” began to take a conspicuous place in plays, invading nearly all the comedies of manners, while some of these were especially consecrated to the subject, such as



SCRIBE IN HIS STUDY

From a caricature by Benjamin.

*L'Argent*, by C. Bonjour (1825), *L'Agiotage*, by Picard and Empis (1826). After Scribe's *Le Mariage d'argent* (1827) and *Le Puff* (1848) came Ponsard's *L'Honneur et l'Argent* (1853) and *La Bourse* (1856), and these bring us to Dumas fils and E. Augier.—Balzac, not satisfied with writing novels, wrote a few plays, which were not very well received. The only one which deserves to survive is *Mercadet* (1851), in which Balzac presents the modern Turcaret.—Among the political comedies is *Les Trois Quartiers*, which Picard and Mazères produced in 1827. This was one of the most successful plays of the day, and a witty and true satire on the bourgeoisie, nobility and the financiers.

The abolition of the cen-

sorship after 1830 resulted in a large number of dramatized political pamphlets, which do not concern us here.—In the genre of historical comedy should be mentioned: *Don Juan d'Autriche*, by C. Delavigne (1835); *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle* (1839), *Un mariage sous Louis XV* (1841), *Les Demoiselles de Saint-Cyr* (1843) by Alexandre Dumas père; and *Les Premières Armes de Richelieu*, by Bayard (1839), one of Déjazet's triumphs.—In comedies about marriage and the family we find situations which foretell the plays of Augier and Dumas fils. *L'Ecole des vieillards*, by Casimir Delavigne (1823), acted by Talma and Mlle Mars, had great success, but to-day it strikes us as singularly banal. *Antony*, by Dumas père (1831), acted by Madame Dorval and Bocage, shows us the type of romantic, Byronic love. It was suc-



ceeded by many similar plays, as *René* was by many similar novels. *Le Mari à la campagne*, by Bayard (1814), is a fine and amusing satire on the drawbacks, for a woman, of an exaggerated and misunderstood devotion. *Un An, ou le Mariage d'amour*, by Ancelot, (1830), is a very simple but strong comedy on misalliances (and may be compared with *Catherine*, by Henri Lavedan).—*La Mère et la Fille*, by Mazères and Empis (1830), is remarkable for its vigour and realism, and may be compared with *Le Supplice d'une femme* by Dumas fils, or *L'Autre Danger* by Maurice Donnay.—*Une Liaison*, by Mazères and Empis (1834) is another bold play, whose too real denouement shocked the public. It may be compared with *Le Mariage d'Olympe* by Emile Augier.—The comedy of manners tended more and more towards realism, parallel with romantic extravagance. However, not altogether wise respect for tradition, academic prejudices and the habits of famous actors kept alive a preference for comedies in verse, which is evident in Ponsard's two great successes, and in the first plays of Emile Augier (1).

## II. — EMILE AUGIER (1820-1889).

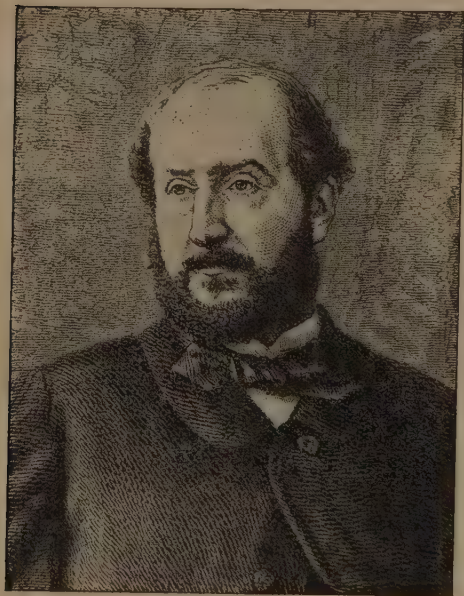
Like Scribe, Augier has no other history than that of his works. Oddly enough, his first play was a success, *La Ciguë* (given at the Odéon). These two short acts in verse, which were soon added to the repertory of the Théâtre-Français, and are still pleasant reading, did not foretell the true Emile Augier, that is, the author of the *Genève de M. Poirier* and *Maître Guérin*. They possess the merit of being extremely clear, both in the moral and literary sense. On the contrary, nothing could be more obscure and insipid than *L'Homme de bien*, a three-act comedy in verse acted in 1845 at the Théâtre-Français. But, in *L'Aventurière* (1848), the anti-romanticist tendencies of this bourgeois writer began to crystallise and in *Gabrielle* (1849) could be found their most complete and realistic expression. Will it be believed that, at that epoch, it required some courage to praise on the stage respect for marriage and family sentiment? The romanticist thesis of the rights of passion, or of passion as making everything right, was then paramount on the stage as well as in novels. In *Gabrielle*, Emile Augier made it a merit in his heroine to resist passion as represented by Stéphane; it was fidelity he honoured and made poetic. "*O père de famille, O poète, je t'aime!*" cries Gabrielle in the denouement.

In all his later plays, Augier was the defender and advocate of the family against ambition, prejudice, sophistry of every sort; and in this respect his work is of the healthiest kind.

So in *Le Mariage d'Olympe* (1855), he shows vividly the danger of a moral

(1) Concerning all these realistic plays previous to Augier and Dumas fils, see CH. M. DES GRANGES *Comédie sous la Restauration* (Fontemoing, 1904).

misalliance; a low woman is not rehabilitated by marriage; she will always be "homesick for the mud".—The young girl who has a rich dowry is an object of envy; Augier shows, in his *Ceinture dorée* (1856), that it is more difficult for her than for anyone else to make a marriage after her own heart, especially if, like Caliste, she has a noble soul, and learns that her father's fortune is due to doubtful speculations. The father must restore the money he has dishonestly made; then, only, the honourable suitor, who has not dared offer himself,



ÉMILE AUGIER  
From a photograph

but who is loved, will pay court to the young girl.—Luxury, like fortune, is destructive of family feeling. One of the boldest of Augier's plays, *Les Lionnes pauvres* (1858), is based on this idea.—In *Un beau Mariage* (1839) another kind of misalliance is dealt with. A young savant, who is on the threshold of a fine career, marries into a frivolous social circle; he suffers from this, and converts his wife to his own serious life by his courage and devotion to science.—*Les Effrontés* (1861) was followed by a sequel, *Le Fils de Giboyer* (1862). In the first of these comedies, we again have a conflict between money and honour: Clémence is on the point of being its victim. The effronté, Vernouillet, at first ashamed of having been condemned as a criminal, holds up his head again, publishes a paper, obtains political protection for himself, and, though he does not succeed in marrying Clémence, continues

to prosper. Then the famous Giboyer appears, an outcast and a bohemian, the modern Figaro, in short, ready for anything, and good for nothing. He becomes the hero of *Le Fils de Giboyer*, a piece containing far too much politics and polemics.—In *La Contagion* (1866), *Paul Forestier* (1868), *Jean de Thommeray* (1872), Augier attributes the decadence of the young generation to idleness, misplaced ambition, and cynicism.—In 1876 he wrote a play on divorce, *Madame Coverlet*, and in 1878 made his adieux to the public with *Les Fourchambault*, in which he once more deals with the beauty of family union, but with situations and sophisms in which we perceive more and more the influence of Dumas fils.

Of Augier's two masterpieces, *Le Gendre de M. Poirier* (1854) and *Maître Guérin* (1864), the first was drawn from Jules Sandeau's novel, *Sacs et Parchemins*. M. Poirier is the M. Jourdain of the reign of Louis-Philippe. The wealthy bourgeoisie of 1840 did not covet the luxury and elegant manners of noblemen, but their titles, and their political influence. "I am ambitious," says M. Poirier piteously, his idea being that "commerce is the true school for statesmen," and he himself having given his daughter to the Marquis de Presle in order to be made a baron and peer. This play, very witty and well-balanced, in which neither party is systematically sacrificed to the other, is both a dramatic masterpiece and a social document (1).—As to *Maître Guérin*, it is the admirable portrayal of a man of harsh will, who becomes rich and powerful, but who forfeits the esteem of all his family and, abandoned by them, dies alone and exploited by low people.

Augier writes in a temperate and vigorous style, sometimes rather declamatory, or too intentionally witty; but he was the most robust and thoughtful French dramatist of the nineteenth century.

### III. — ALEXANDRE DUMAS FILS (1824-1895).

Dumas fils, son of the novelist and dramatist, made his debut with a play called *La Dame aux Camélias*, in 1852, which was founded on a novel he had published in 1848. The subject is banal, and not moral; but the drama was written simply, and the style and staging were of a realism which struck the public.—Dumas afterwards wrote with varying success, often arousing more scandal than applause: *Diane de Lys* (1853), *Le Demi-Monde* (1855), *La Question d'argent* (1857), *Un Père prodigue* (1859), *L'Ami des femmes* (1864), *Les Idées de Mme Aubray* (1867), *La Princesse Georges* (1871), *La Femme de Claude* (1873), *L'Étrangère* (1876), *Denise* (1885), and *Francillon* (1887).

Dumas fils was a disciple of Diderot in so far as he thought that the stage should be useful. "All literature," he wrote, "which does not keep in view the perfectibility, the moral uplifting of society, the ideal, the useful, is a rickety, unhealthy, stillborn literature. The servile reproduction of facts and of men is the work of a clerk and a photographer; and I defy anybody to name a single writer, who survived his time, whose object was not to improve mankind." Dumas fils was not satisfied, like Augier, with recalling society, spoiled as it was by romanticist nonsense, to the practice of the old family virtues; he was a reformer, and a thesis animates, though it often spoils, all his plays.

His was at the same time one of the most generous and most misleading minds of our time; he had true ideas, and they resulted in absurd or mons-

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1267.

trous conclusions. Sometimes, for instance in *Les Idées de Mme Aubray*, and in *Denise*, he confounds forgiveness with esteem, and preaches marriage under conditions which banish moral security. Sometimes, as in *La Femme de Claude*, he demands the punishment of the guilty woman, and cries "Kill her!"—Finally, for the embarrassments or conflicts of marriage he finds only one remedy,

that is, divorce (*La Femme de Claude*, *La Princesse Georges*, *L'Étrangère*, etc.). These plays contributed, quite as much as discussions in the press, to excite public opinion.

Dumas *fils* is a realist, with a sharp and penetrating mind, but he is also "the son of his father;" and this accounts for the romanticist element in his plays. His plots are often strange to the point of absurdity, as in *L'Étrangère* and *La Princesse de Bagdad*. Sometimes he makes them obscure with an Ibsen — anticipating symbolism, as in *La Femme de Claude*. These "romanticist impulses" are also evident in the tirades of his "reasoning" characters, or of his young men and girls; between two realistic scenes, an unseasonable and luxuriant poetry invades the play. His prefaces, at times so



ALEXANDRE DUMAS FILS

From a lithograph by Penauille.

eloquent, form on the whole incoherent combinations of paradox and sophistry.

Dumas *fils* also inherited from his father a dramatic gift, visible in all his plays, which enabled him to construct logical and powerful plots: for instance, in *La Princesse Georges*, a genuine prose tragedy, and *Denise*, a comedy based entirely on passion and sentiment, and written according to the three classic unities.

He did not exactly create characters. His young girls are, for the most part, "bleating lambs", who bid fair to become insupportable "women of



the world." His women are so occupied with developing theses, that they resemble talking machines : as, for instance, the Duchesse de Septmonts in *L'Étrangère*, Francine de Riverolles in *Francillon*, Césarine in *La Femme de Claude*, and Séverine in *La Princesse Georges*, not to speak of his female logicians like Mme de Rumières or Mme Godefroy. An exception must be made in the case of Denise and her mother, Mme Brissot, the most vital characters in this gallery of women. The men are even more artificial ; they are all commissioned by the author to incarnate a thesis and deliver speeches. We must except the Duc de Septmonts in *L'Étrangère*, M. Brissot in *Denise*, and especially a number of incidental characters, who are occasionally very amusing, like Carillac in *Francillon*.

The style of Dumas *fils* is cutting and witty, often oratorical. It is not, truly speaking, a dramatic style. All the characters speak the same language, and their speech never differentiates them. This naturalistic writer lacks, in the highest degree, naturalness. In reality, he is a pamphleteer, a journalist or a preacher, who casts his polemics in dramatic form, because, as we said, he is " the son of his father. "

#### IV.—OTHER AUTHORS OF COMEDIES.

**EUGÈNE LABICHE** (1815-1888), is, after Scribe, the most illustrious representative writer of vaudevilles. He understood, like Scribe, how to introduce well observed types into his little plays with their slight plots : bourgeois, clerks, notaries, foreigners, etc. Perhaps he is superior to Scribe in a certain gift for ironical shrewdness, and for semi-benevolent, semi-ill-natured common sense which appears in his best plays : *Le Misanthrope et L'Auvergnat* (1852) (1) *Le Voyage de M. Perrichon* (1860), (2) *La Poudre aux yeux* (1861), *La Cagnotte* (1864), etc. Furthermore, he renovated the form of the long vaudeville by constructing ingenious plots based on misunderstandings, and arranged with an amazing crescendo effect, the model in this genre being *Le Chapeau de paille d'Italie*. Finally, into his easy and natural dialogue he sometimes introduces the most comical nonsense, relieved with witticisms more significant than those of Dumas *fils* ;—M. Perrichon, for example, says to the man whom he believes he has saved : " You owe everything to me... I shall never forget it. " Here we find already the " mots de nature, " the invention of which was claimed by the *Théâtre libre*.—The merit of Labiche's work, apparently light and superficial, becomes more and more evident. Emile Augier wrote : " The plays of Labiche gain a hundred percent in being read ; the burlesque side vanishes, while the truly comic element appears " (3).

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1278.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle p. 598.

(3) Preface to *Le Théâtre de Labiche*.



THE ACTORS OF THE THÉÂTRE-FRANÇAIS AT THE END OF THE XIX<sup>e</sup> CENTURY  
*From the picture by Louis Léroud (1894).*

Coquelin Cadet  
 Mlle Bartet  
 Leloir  
 Paul Mounet

De Férandy  
 Worms  
 Le Bargy  
 Got

Boucher  
 Mlle Reichenberg  
 Mme Pierson

Mme Broisat  
 Mme Baretta  
 Truffier

Mlle Dudlay  
 Baille  
 Mounet-Sully  
 Silvain  
 A. Lambert

**VICTORIEN SARDOU** (1831-1908).—Sardou was one of the most prolific dramatic authors of the nineteenth century. He began modestly ; but the success of his *Patte de mouche* (1860) suddenly placed him above all his rivals. In 1861 he achieved a veritable triumph with his *Nos intimes*. Afterwards he produced *La Famille Benoiton* (1865), *Nos bons Villageois* (1866), *Patrie* (1869), *Rabagas* (1873), *La Haine* (1874), *Dora* (1877), *Daniel Rochat* (1880), *Divorçons* (1880), *Fédora* (1884), *Théodora* (1884), *Thermidor* (1891), *Madame Sans-Gêne* (1893), *L'Affaire des Poisons* (1907), etc.

To begin with, Sardou was one of the most skilful French constructors of plots. Like Scribe, and even more easily, he presented, knotted and unknotted the most complex subject. For instance, in *Les Pattes de mouche* the plot turns on a letter which passes from hand to hand, is lost, and which the spectator constantly fears will reach the hands of the one who ought not to read it. This is a trifle, no doubt, but in itself it is perfect. The same quality is found in all his plots.—In the second place, Sardou is one of those who have often succeeded in fusing comedy with drama : *Nos Intimes*, *La Famille Benoiton*, *Dora* are composed of two parts : a witty satire of contemporary society and a crisis of passion. Generally, in the third or fourth act, these characters, so light and amusing, find themselves involved in some very compromising or mysterious affair, and the spectator foresees the worst catastrophes. But everything comes out right ; as the audience must go home satisfied, all the tragical difficulties are attributed to misunderstandings, and almost all Sardou's comedies could be entitled : *All's Well that Ends Well*, or *Much Ado about Nothing*. Sardou also contributed to the satirical delineation of the manners of his time, and such plays as *La Famille Benoiton*, *Nos bons Villageois*, *Rabagas*, etc., may be consulted



SARDOU

From a photograph by Dornac.

as if they were actually documents, and frequently very penetrating ones. —Finally, Sardou often composed plays of a clearer inspiration, and remarkable for their unity of action and tone, such as *Patrie*, *La Haine* and *Fédora*, which we believe will be considered his three masterpieces. The suppleness of his talent appears in this versatility. Who could have supposed the author of *Les Pattes de mouche* capable of writing *Patrie*? Sardou always achieved more popular success by his lighter pieces, with mixtures of superficial comical elements with tragic elements meant to be laughed at — but it is his serious dramas that will keep his name alive.

**MEILHAC** and **HALÉVY** were inseparable collaborators, who continued and transformed the Scribe vaudeville from 1860 to 1880. *La Petite Marquise*, *La Vie Parisienne*, and operettas like *La Belle Hélène* offer the amiable satire and buffoonery current in gay society. Once the two authors rose to high comedy with *Froufrou*, a play full of sensibility and naturalness, which deserves to keep its place in the standard repertory.

**ÉDOUARD PAILLERON** (1834-1899) surpassed the pleasant mediocrity of his other plays when he wrote *Le Monde où l'on s'ennuie* (1881), a piquant portrayal of academic salons with the pedantry and rivalries which, in spite of polite manners and high-sounding words, are found there.—The countess de Céran is a Philaminte of the end of the nineteenth century, no longer a bourgeoisie but a great lady. She works for the entry of her son Roger into the Institute, and wishes to marry him to a rich and learned English girl who translates Schopenhauer. Her salon serves as a platform or spring-board for the Oriental scholar Saint-Réau, the philosopher Bellac, some laureate poets, etc. The satire upon this society is evolved in the most witty manner by the mother of the Countess de Céran, the duchess de Réville, a pleasing logician, and by Raymond, the sub-prefect, whose wife, Jeanne, is an attractive parody of all the *précieuses*. A well-managed plot, skilfully harmonised with the satire, brings about two marriages. The third act, in which three couples play at hide-and-seek in the shadows of the greenhouse, has been justly compared to the chestnut scene in the *Mariage de Figaro*. *Le Monde où l'on s'ennuie*, whose success at first was attributed to personal allusions, is still a favourite play with audiences that know nothing of academic rivalries.

Pailleron's other plays are *L'Age ingrat*, *L'Étincelle*, and *Cabolins*.

## V. — NATURALISM IN THE DRAMA

**HENRY BECQUE** (1837-1901) marks a strong reaction against the school of Scribe and Victorien Sardou. For their moral optimism and indulgent philosophy, Becque substitutes the darkest pessimism; he was the first to writ



those dismal, unmoral plays in which the writer intends to represent "society as it is", that is, consisting entirely of rascals and dupes—the *comédie rosse*. The two best plays by this playwright, who worked with difficulty, and got his plays produced with still more difficulty, are *Les Corbeaux* (1882) and *La Parisienne* (1885).

The "**THÉÂTRE LIBRE**" (1887-1895).—M. Antoine, an amateur actor, founded at Montmartre the Free Theatre, so called because its plays, being represented only before an invited audience, were not submitted to the censor. It could, therefore, risk everything. The first advantage arising from the Théâtre Libre was to rid the public of a certain number of would-be great men, whose plays were rejected by all the managers and who claimed unrecognised genius. Antoine produced their plays before his unprejudiced audience, and it promptly rejected them. The second advantage of the Théâtre Libre was that it proved completely that freedom to say anything whatever on the stage, when it passes certain limits, is more tiresome than scandalous. A few horrible plays were given before the three hundred invited guests of this theatre, plays which as long as they remained in the pigeon-holes of the appalled managers passed for masterpieces, but which, when represented, amazed even this audience, which was ready for anything, by their worthlessness. All the same, the Free Theatre did reveal a few vigorous and bold dramatists, such as Georges Ancey (*L'École des veufs*), Émile Fabre (*L'Argent*), Henry Céard (*Les Résignés*), etc.—On the other hand, it helped to popularise the masterpieces of the foreign stage; and it should not be forgotten that Ibsen's plays, *Les Revenants*, *Le Canard sauvage*, *La Dame de la mer*, and Hauptmann's *Les Tisserands* had their first French representation at the Free Theatre.—Finally, the unhealthy influence of this theatre upon contemporary dramatists cannot be denied. Pessimism, vulgarity, "mots de nature" and especially unmorality, that is to say, vice which is ignorant of itself and is happy in its ignorance, are a few of the essential elements of current comedy; and for this condition of French dramatic literature the *Théâtre Libre* is largely responsible.

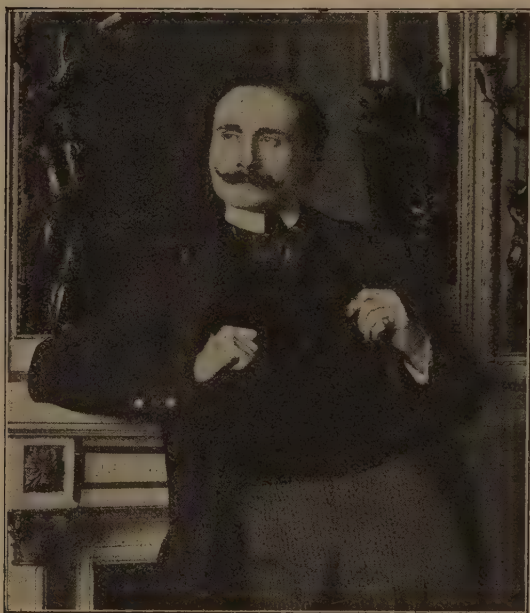
## VI. — EDMOND ROSTAND (1868-1919)

A reaction was to be expected, creating a counter-current which still opposes the foregoing conditions. Besides the plays of Jean Richepin, the name which incarnates this idealistic, poetic and moral reaction, is that of Edmond Rostand. This writer's first success was *Les Romanesques*, given in 1894 at the Théâtre-Français. Its subject is very simple: Two fathers, who are country neighbours, wish to bring about a marriage between their children, Percinet and Sylvette. The young man and the girl are very romantic; and a bourgeois marriage seems

impossible to them. The two fathers, therefore, play the game of the Montagues and Capulets. Percinet-Romeo arranges meetings with Sylvette-Juliette at the other end of the park. To hasten matters, the two fathers prepare a counterfeit kidnapping of Sylvette by hired bravos; Percinet defends his beauty, and her

father consents to the marriage as a reward for his courage. Meanwhile, the two fathers, who now occupy the same garden, begin to quarrel. Percinet and Sylvette discover that they have been tricked. Percinet runs away in search of real adventures; he returns disillusionised, and all ends with a happy marriage. It is the style of this charming little play which gives it all its value.

In 1895, Rostand composed *La Princesse lointaine*, borrowed from a mediæval legend, mentioned in our text (1). Rostand gave this subject a most luxurious setting, in verses of oriental splendour. In 1897, *La Samaritaine*, the subject of which was taken from the Bible, exhibited Rostand's



PORTRAIT OF ROSTAND

From a photograph by Dornac.

talent in a new light, more simple and exquisite.—In December of the same year the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre produced *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

If ever the word *overwhelming* applied to a theatrical success, it was to that of *Cyrano*. The public, the critics, everybody applauded it. *Feuilletons* were widely enthusiastic in their accounts of it. This was, first, because the play was thoroughly French in spirit. In absolute reaction against the "naturalism" which had characterised the preceding thirty years, Rostand's work was related to that of Victor Hugo in *Marion Delorme* and *Ruy-Blas*, to that of Corneille in *Don Sanche d'Aragon*, and to the burlesques of the time of Louis XIII. Then *Cyrano*, in himself, was a perfect hero for the romanticists, he in whom the sublime and the grotesque were united. They had thought to discover such a hero in

(1) Cf. p. 93.

*Ruy-Blas*, but a lackey is not essentially grotesque, nor the reticent lover of the Queen of Spain sublime. Cyrano, on the contrary, is both burlesque and grotesque. Physically, he is more so than anyone else. His nose, "qui d'un quart d'heure en tout lieu le précède," dooms him to be the victim of jests and ridicule more than a Don Quixote or a Falstaff. He is burlesque in his wit and his imagination; he is the ridiculous author of the *Voyage dans la lune*; he belongs to that group "Louis XIII", which evokes memories of Callot's engravings and Teniers' vagrants. If he were only that, Cyrano would make us laugh and then fatigue us, along with the Saint-Amands, the Farets and the Scarrons. But he is something more. Under this grotesque exterior is a heroic and romantic martyr to love, and a refined *précieux*. The spectator is first moved to laughter, and then to emotion. Full of restrained tenderness, always on the point of declaring himself, but withheld by his consciousness of his ridiculous appearance, he serves as a go-between for an insipid gallant and the very Roxane whom he adores, generously lending his wit and heart to this rival. He only declares his love when he is dying, and sure of not hearing her answer. The French public was pleased to recognise itself in Cyrano. Courageous, witty, eloquent, the character is a synthesis of French national qualities. It also incarnates the most fascinating of French defects: courage easily turned to boasting, generosity to Don-Quixotism, and eloquence to vaunting. Finally, its quick and variegated action, its skilful plot, the vibrant morality of the subject, and the incomparable intensity of the style in which it is written, all contribute to make *Cyrano* a charming and lasting play.

In 1900 Rostand produced *L'Aiglon*, which had a brilliant success. It was a *tour de force* to put the whole history of the young Duke de Reichstadt in six acts. The poetry of the play becomes more and more picturesque; and everything is concrete. Every symbol is incarnated in a living being; and every idea becomes visible in some well-chosen object. Take, for instance, the little wooden soldiers that Flambeau takes out of his pockets, the imperial knick-knacks he spreads before the marvelling eyes of the duke; the little hat set upon the table, which hypnotises Metternich; the grenadier's uniform hidden under Flambeau's livery, the vision of the Wagram battle-field, etc. When one reads it, *L'Aiglon* leaves a somewhat confused impression, but on the stage it is full of life and poetry.—Finally, Rostand produced *Chantecler*, a fantastic and symbolical play which does not seem to have satisfied the impatient expectations of the public, but which, on a reading, reveals marvellous originality in subject and form.

## VII. — CONTEMPORARY COMEDY.

Nothing could be more varied than French dramatic literature has been since the last years of the nineteenth century. Under the influence of so many

manifestos, prefaces and bold efforts, the public, which is always increasing with regard to the theatre, has also become more eclectic. It seems to be of the opinion that all genres of plays are good, even the tiresome genre; and provided the author has talent and the actors reputation, it welcomes with sympathetic curiosity, more or less lasting, everything submitted to its attention. The consequence of this is an intense production of plays which it is difficult to classify. We must be satisfied with simply mentioning the most remarkable of them :

**M. DE PORTO-RICHE** has written : *Amoureuse* (1891), *Le Passé* (1897), *Le Vieil Homme* (1911). He is a psychologist whose finesse is sometimes exquisite, sometimes irritating; he is like a realistic Marivaux.

**PAUL HERVIEU** (died 1915) was a disciple of Em. Augier and Dumas fils. He chose subjects in which sentiment, sometimes passion, is in a struggle with law; his action is characterised by a sober energy; his style is lofty, and vigorous without ever becoming brutal. His best pieces, which are more tragedies than comedies, are : *Les Tenailles* (1895), *La Loi de l'homme* (1897), *Connais-toi* (1909).

**JULES LEMAITRE** (died 1914) treated, with irony and penetration, subjects connected with social and political morals, and his plays reveal perfect knowledge of the art of dramatic writing. After the appearance of his first play, *Révoltée*, in 1889, he won a resounding success with his *Le Député Leveau* (1891), which was not only a piquant satire on *boulangisme*, but also a lasting study of modern political morals. He then wrote *Le Pardon* (1895), *L'Ainé* (1898), *La Massière* (1903), etc., and each of his plays proves the finesse of his psychology and the charm of his style (1).

In a more limited and grave genre, we have the social plays of **M. J. BRIEUX** : *Blanchette* (1892), *L'Évasion* (1896), *La Robe rouge* (1900), *Les Remplaçantes* (1901), *Le Berceau* (1903), etc. M. Brieux does not fear to grapple frankly with the most serious and delicate problems, handling them with an honesty sometimes rough but often eloquent. He strives to do away with contemporary sophistry with respect to the benefits of knowledge; he recalls judges to their professional duty, and scores politicians who try to influence justice; he shames those mothers who confide the upbringing of their children to others, and points out the terrible ambiguities of divorce in its relation to the child. \*

**M. ÉMILE FABRE** devotes his plays chiefly to the subject of money. The most remarkable of them is entitled *Les Ventres dorés* (1905), which is sombre and vigorous. His success does honour to the taste and morality of the public.

**M. FRANÇOIS DE CUREL** is less a dramatic author than a powerful moralist and sociologist, who places his philosophical studies in a theatric-

(1) On J. Lemaître, as a critic, cf. p. 810.



al framework. *Le Repas du lion* (1897) sets forth the problem of the solidarity between the governing classes and the working people. *La Nouvelle Idole* (1899) is a magnificent study of the scientific conscience.

We shall place in the second rank M. **Maurice Donnay**, whose work is above all witty in *L'Autre Danger* (1902) and *Paraitre* (1906); —M. **Henri Lavedan**, who is very clever in handling rather conventional subjects, as in *Le Prince d'Aurec* (1894), *Le Marquis de Priola* (1902), *Le Duel* (1905).—M. **Alfred Capus**, an amusing optimist in *La Veine* (1902), *Les Deux écoles* (1905), etc...—M. **Henri Bataille**, a bold psychologist, but too much bent upon astonishing the public; —M. **Henri Bernstein**, a very ingenious constructor of plots which are at once simple and terrible.

Many other names could be added to this list, the drama having always been in France, the genre which has absorbed and unfortunately spoiled the greatest number of gifted writers.

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SCENES FROM COMEDIES  
Ornament of the time of Louis-Philippe.



QUASIMODO

Frieze taken from a romanticist edition of *Notre-Dame-de-Paris*.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE NOVEL IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

#### SUMMARY

1° FROM 1800 TO 1825, we should mention *Atala* (1801), *René* (1802), by Chateaubriand; *Adolphe*, by B. CONSTANT (1816), and the novels of Mme DE STAEL (*Delphine*, 1802; *Corinne*, 1807).—Other novelists were XAVIER DE MAISTRE and CHARLES NODIER.

2° In the HISTORICAL GENRE, under the influence of Sir Walter Scott: A. DE VIGNY wrote *Cinq-Mars* (1826); VICTOR HUGO, *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831), *Les Misérables* (1862); A. DUMAS père, *Les Mousquetaires* (1844), and interminable sequels.—About 1840 appeared the roman-feuilleton (novel published in instalments in newspapers) written by EUGÈNE SUE, PONSON DU TERRAIL, etc.

3° In the REALISTIC AND NATURALISTIC GENRES: STENDHAL published in 1831 *Le Rouge et le Noir* and in 1839 *La Chartreuse de Parme*. He is a keen observer, with a dry style.—BALZAC (1799-1850) wrote a long series of novels of manners under the general title of *Comédie humaine*. He was the most prolific creator of types in French literature; he describes both the milieus and the characters. His masterpieces are *Eugénie Grandet* and *Le Père Goriot*.—MÉRIMÉ was successful as a writer of short stories.—GUSTAVE FLAUBERT is a realist in *Madame Bovary* (1857), and a romanticist in *Salammbô* (1862).—ALPHONSE DAUDET was a vibrant and poetic realist (*Jack*, 1876; *Le Nabab*, 1879).—ÉMILE ZOLA was a romantic naturalist (*L'Assommoir*, 1877; *Germinal*, 1885).

4° THE IDEALISTIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVEL.—GEORGE SAND (1804-1876), at first wrote romances of passion (*Indiana*, *Valentine*); then socialistic novels (*Le Meunier d'Angibault*); finally, novels of rural life (*François le*

**Champi, La Mare au diable.** George Sand excels in describing nature: she is simple, eloquent and poetic.— **JULES SANDEAU, OCTAVE FEUILLET, A. THEURIET** were among others novelists in this vein.

5° Among **CONTEMPORARY** novelists, **PAUL BOURGET** prefers the study of social questions; **PIERRE LOTI** portrays foreign countries.



GROTESQUE INITIAL  
of the XIX century.

WE have already seen that the novel, represented in every epoch of French literature by very original works, was transformed and enriched in the eighteenth century by a double influence, that of the English novel, which led to a more minute observation of the middle classes and of ordinary sentiments, and the influence of certain social tendencies such as close examination and free discussion, and of curiosity about moral and political problems. In the nineteenth century the novel became the most extensive and most comprehensive of all the literary genres; it was to be romantic as it was in the Middle Ages, psychological as in the seventeenth century, social as in the eighteenth century; and, furthermore, it was to reflect all the aspirations of the nineteenth

century, and to be successively lyrical, realistic, socialistic, naturalistic, and symbolistic; — which is to say, that in future it was to evade all definition. A novel to-day is a volume of about three hundred pages, in which the author relates a story, true or false, but in which he also includes anything he likes: politics, sociology, pedagogy, religion, morals, description, psychology, — and, when he is able, wit, sentiment and style.

## I. — THE NOVEL BETWEEN 1800 AND 1825. THE PRECURSORS.

**CHATEAUBRIAND** and **Mme DE STAËL**. — Let us recall, to fix it in our minds, *Atala* (1801), and *René* (1802), already analysed above, and related to the novels of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (*Paul et Virginie*, was dated 1787) by their descriptions. They renovated psychology in the novel by an analysis, both lofty and profound, of sentiments.—The novels of Mme de Staël, *Delphine* (1802) and *Corinne* (1807), foretold those of George Sand.

**BENJAMIN CONSTANT** (1767-1830) — Statesman and journalist, a man of great intelligence but weak character, Benjamin Constant occupies an eminent

rank in French literature by his *Adolphe*, a short autobiographical novel, which appeared in 1816, and might have been written yesterday.

In a nude, direct style, he analyses, with surprising accuracy, the slow and sure dissolution of an unfortunate love. *Adolphe* is, perhaps even now, our only realistic novel; it seems to us far superior to those of Stendhal.



BENJAMIN CONSTANT

Drawn and engraved by Rullmann.

### CHARLES NODIER

(1781-1844).— We have already seen that Charles Nodier was one of the initiators of romanticism (1). His charming and animated talent, hardly capable of great work but very effective in slight and exquisite pieces, deserves mention more for his short stories than for his romanticist novels, such as *Les Proscrits* (1802), *Le Peintre de Salzbourg* (1803) and *Jean Sbogar* (1818). We find the most perfect admixture of moderate realism with poetic sentiment in his *Trilby* (1822), *La Fée aux Miettes* (1832), *La Neuvaine de la Chandeleur* (1839) and *Le Chien de Brisquet* (1844) (2).

### XAVIER DE MAISTRE

(1773-1852). — De Maistre writes in the same entirely French vein, with clearness, wit, a never over-emphasised sensibility, and a capacity to please, especially, because he seems to count upon the intelligence of the reader. In 1794 he had published his *Voyage autour de ma chambre*: a convalescent officer in his garrison at Alexandria, in Italy, reviews all the surrounding objects, while yielding himself up to memories and digressions. The setting of the book is simple and natural: who could not write about a journey around his own room? The difficulty would lie in the choice of subjects, the variety,

(1) Cf. p. 744.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1284.



truth and finesse of the sentiments; and in these Xavier de Maistre excels (1). *Le Lépreux de la cité d'Aoste* is a dialogue between a soldier passing through Aoste (the author himself) and a leper shut up in a tower. The subject is trifling, but we read the dialogue with pleasure, for its lofty philosophy and perfect Christian resignation. In *La Jeune Sibérienne*, de Maistre relates the adventures of a young girl who travels on foot from Siberia to Petrograd to ask pardon for her father.

After these writers, who in a way prepared the new genres, we shall classify the principal novelists under the following heads: historical novels; realistic and naturalistic novels; idealistic and psychological novels. These categories are not at all absolute, and we adopt them, almost regretfully, in order to follow a convenient tradition; but we shall point out, wherever necessary, the complexity of most of the great novelists, parts of whose work even cannot always be classified under the same head.

## II. — THE HISTORICAL NOVEL.

The historical novel is one whose hero is either borrowed from history, or is conventional and entirely imagined by the author, but is made to move on an historic background. The scenery of the novel is the description of some special epoch, reconstituted more or less by means of memoirs, chronicles and letters, etc. Local colour dominates, as in the theatre. It is, then, an essentially romanticist genre, which was brought to France, renovated and perfected, from England. It was in Great Britain, in fact, that between 1814 and 1826 Walter Scott published a series of novels, whose success and influence gave rise to an immense number of similar works throughout Europe. Scott excelled in the choice of backgrounds, and the adaptation of his characters thereto; *Waverley*, *Ivanhoe*, *The Monastery*, *Quentin Durward* interested readers not only by plots as romantic as one could wish, amusing and moral, but by pictures of Scotland in the eighteenth century, of England in the twelfth or sixteenth, of France in the fifteenth, etc.

**ALFRED DE VIGNY** (2) published, in 1826, *Cinq-Mars ou Une Conjuration sous Louis XIII.* In the Introduction he presents a theory of the historical novel, in which he claims rights for the poet even when he handles historical facts. Hence he invents more than he paints his characters, such as Louis XIII, Cinq-Mars, de Thou, Richelieu. If this novel had not preceded *Marion Delorme* by a few years, it might have been thought that Vigny had borrowed his trivial historical philosophy from Victor Hugo's drama. But, such as it is, this novel

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 420.

(2) On VIGNY as a lyric poet, cf. p. 750; on his plays, cf. p. 776.

will continue to be read for its style, which is firm, coloured, and on the whole picturesque and temperate.

In 1832 Vigny wrote *Stello ou les Diables bleus*, in which there was nothing historical except certain examples. The author's theme is to demonstrate that the poet, or more generally the man of letters, is always misunderstood, no matter what form of society he attempts to live in, whether an absolute monarchy or a republic. The three examples he gives are Gilbert, Chatterton and André Chénier. In 1835 Vigny wrote a fine drama about *Chatterton*. The episode in which Chénier figures is the most moving, but Vigny too lightly attributes an odious role to Marie-Joseph Chénier.—Vigny's last novel *Servitude et grandeur militaire* (1835) is also a "demonstration," but a very noble one, which does honour to the soldier-poet. History only appears as a background for the tales intended as illustrations in the book, such as *Laurette ou le Cachet rouge*, *La Veillée de Vincennes*, *La Vie et la Mort du capitaine Renaud ou la Canne de jonc*. From every point of view, and in spite of a somewhat empty solemnity in the theoretical chapters, this is Vigny's best prose work.

**VICTOR HUGO**, fascinated by every genre (1), wrote while still very young some thundering novels which today excite the reader's smiles: *Bug-Jargal* and *Han d'Islande*. *Le Dernier Jour d'un condamné* (1829) may also be passed by; it is a more pathological than psychological study in somewhat fanciful realism.

His first estimable novel is *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831). The plot, dealing with violently antithetical characters, is laborious and not very interesting in itself. A young Bohemian girl, Esméralda—a lost child who finds her mother in the end (thanks to an amulet and a little slipper)—is loved by young Captain Phoebus. She is persecuted by the hatred of the deacon, Claude Frollo, and protected by the deformed Quasimodo, the bell-ringer of Notre-Dame. Phoebus is the hero of this melodrama, as Claude Frollo is the villain; and Quasimodo is the likable buffoon, uniting in himself, like Triboulet, physical grotesqueness with sentimental sublimity. But though the invention and psychology of this novel are very weak, Victor Hugo redeems himself in the descriptive parts, in which his accuracy deserves less praise than the power of his imagination. In book I, *La grande salle du Palais de Justice* (chap. I), — in book II, *La Place de Grève* (chap. II),—in book III, *Les Cloches* (chap. III), are immortal descriptions. In these Hugo reveals himself the same seer as in poetry; everything takes on a body and a soul, and develops into a strange and magnificent symbol. Certain scenes, like the fall of Claude Frollo (book IV, chap. II), terrify by their realism.

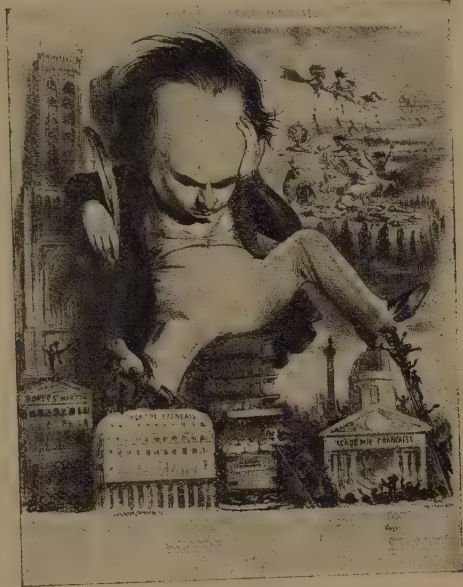
*Les Misérables*, begun before 1850 and only published in 1862, is a surcharged, composite work, a collection of novels rather than a novel (the story of the

(1) On Hugo as a lyric poet, cf. p. 745; on his plays, p. 770; on his parliamentary eloquence, p. 843.

convict Valjean and Bishop Myriel, the story of Fantine, of Cosette, etc.); and, on the other hand, it is a thesis. Under the influence of the humanitarian and socialistic doctrines of Cabet and Proudhon, Hugo pleads the cause of all those whom society scorns, and for whose crimes it is responsible. Magnificent pages abound in this strange work: the portrait of the Bishop, the flight of Jean Valjean, the description of the Benedictine convent where the child Cosette was reared, and where Jean Valjean took refuge, the battle of Waterloo (1), etc.; but it is much less original than *Notre-Dame de Paris*; it is, in reality, Balzac mixed with George Sand, and often it is nothing more than Eugène Sue.

We should also mention *Les Travaillleurs de la mer* in 1866, where Hugo reappears as a great descriptive "poet," but with an exuberance which spoils his most beautiful visions. "We skip twenty pages to come to the point." The story of Giliatt and the octopus would be a real masterpiece, if Hugo had not thought it advisable to write a chapter of natural history in an apocalyptic style on the subject of the monster, by which he intended to make the reader shudder, but only makes him smile.—In 1869 he wrote *L'Homme qui rit*, in 1872 *Quatre-vingt-treize*,—and these were his last novels. There is more simplicity and sobriety in *Quatre-vingt-treize*, and the characters, though slightly systematic,<sup>1</sup> are handled in an interesting manner.

To sum up, in all his novels Victor Hugo seems like a poet who, released from the discipline of verse and the natural limitation of the genres, gives himself free scope, and becomes the toy and victim of his prodigious imagination. He resembles an overflowing river which no longer finds its banks nor its direction, but which, if it enters a narrow valley or a rapidly descending slope, resumes in the one case its majestic flow, and in the other flings itself downward in a sparkling cascade.



VICTOR HUGO LEANING AGAINST NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS  
From a caricature in the *Charivari*.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 962.

**ALEXANDRE DUMAS** père (1803-1870) (1). — Several pages would be necessary for a list of the novels of Alexandre Dumas, who is less a novelist than a wonderful teller of tales (2). His most popular work is *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (1844), in which d'Artagnan, Athos, Porthos and Aramis, represent,

summarily but truthfully enough, four different temperaments, which their valets, each one appropriate to his master, complete. The four friends are involved in the story of Richelieu and Mazarin—with as little historical accuracy as possible, but with vivid picturesqueness.—In *Vingt ans après* (1845), Dumas carries the same characters to England, where he describes the death of Charles I; the story then returns to Paris, at the time of the Fronde.—The success of the *Mousquetaires* not having yet been exhausted, Dumas added *Le Vicomte*



FRONTISPIECE OF A ROMANTICIST EDITION  
of *Notre-Dame-de-Paris*.

*de Bragelonne* (1847), in which he introduces the melancholy figure of Mlle de la Vallière.—We should also mention his *Monte-Cristo* (1845), *Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge* (1848), etc.—So long as we do not seek in Dumas' novels either history or psychology, and read him just "to pass the time," we are

(1) On ALEXANDRE DUMAS' plays, cf. p. 773.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 553; 2nd cycle, p. 1287.



truly amused by this indefatigable fancy, which recalls that of La Calprenède in the seventeenth century. Dumas père had numerous collaborators, who helped him to invent as well as to edit his novels in accordance with the demands of publishers and newspapers. Of these the most distinguished was Auguste Maquet.

We should also classify under historical novels the *Capitaine Fracasse* of Théophile Gautier (1863), which is the story of a troupe of provincial actors. This work is chiefly known for its celebrated descriptions—for example *Le Château de la misère*, etc.

**The “Roman-feuilleton”.** — It was about the year 1840 that the newspapers began to publish in daily instalments long novels of a more or less historical, fanciful, socialistic or moral character. Until that time the “feuilleton” of the newspapers, or the bottom part of the front page, had been reserved for dramatic criticism, various literary subjects, daily jottings, puns, charades, etc. In 1841, the *Journal des Débats* was the first to publish a novel in instalments in its feuilleton — a work by Frédéric Soulié, called *Les Mémoires du Diable*. In 1842 the same journal published *Les Mystères de Paris* by Eugène Sue.

The public swallowed whole this bait of a new genre. They stood in line before the office of *Le Journal des Débats* to get the next *feuilleton* hot from the press. The author of *Les Mystères de Paris* received letters begging him to put an end to the sufferings of his heroine, to unmask the impostors and punish the guilty. It is also said that Eugène Sue, being put into prison for having neglected his duty as a national guardsman, was in danger of not being able to go on with his story, whereupon Marshal Soult, an excited reader of *Les Mystères*, hastened to set the author at liberty. Sue earned a fortune by this kind of writing. — Dumas père soon became the most fruitful provider of such works for the newspapers. *Monte-Cristo* appeared in *Le Constitutionnel*, *La Reine Margot* in *La Presse*, etc. After them, Ponson du Terrail, Paul Féval, Erckmann-Chatrion and similar authors continued to manufacture, not without imagination, an enormous number of novels, generally written day by day. And they still have successors.

From this fragmentary mode of publication resulted certain peculiarities of composition and style, explained by the necessity of holding public attention, at once exacting and naive, in suspense. Eugène Sue and Dumas père possessed, to the point of genius, the art of rousing and sustaining curiosity without ever completely satisfying it, and weaving a multitude of plots which unfolded with clever tardiness. — We may imagine what history becomes in a genre so manipulated: — it furnished nothing more than names, places and costumes. — As to the style, it took on a specious vivacity, and a false swiftness of description and dialogue. It may be said that the *roman-feuilleton*, the

"serial story", has killed the historical novel, which began with a work of genuine literature, *Cinq-Mars*, and ended with *Rocambole*. Nevertheless, Gustave Flaubert's *Salammbô* belongs to the historical genre, but renewed by the realistic method.

### III. — THE REALISTIC AND NATURALISTIC NOVEL.

Opposed to the poetry, the utopian, vagueness, the false local colour, the lyrical or absurd psychology of the historical novel, we find the intentional simplicity, minute exactitude and scientific pessimism of the realistic novel.

We have already noted a realistic novel in the *Adolphe* of Benjamin Constant. The most illustrious representative authors in this genre are : *Stendhal*, *Balzac*, *Mérimée*, *Flaubert*, the *Goncourts*, *Alphonse Daudet* and *Emile Zola*. The mere enumeration of these names proves to those who know their novels what variety and what contradictions may be found under the same title.

**STENDHAL** (1783-1842). — This was the pseudonym of Henry Beyle, the son of an advocate in the *Parlement* of Grenoble, who became successively a soldier, an auditor in the Council of State, Consul of France at Civita Vecchia, etc. A man of perfectly insupportable character, as pretentious as he was vulgar, making a point of paradoxes in art, in literature, in politics, in religion, he was nevertheless endowed with a gift for keen observation. He knew how to make a penetrating examination of men, and his realism is altogether psychological. His purpose was to note and unravel the secret motives behind men's actions; and he perceived every slightest nuance with a certainty that is the admiration of philosophers. Taine says of him: "No one has taught us better how to open our eyes and see." Like Montaigne, it was in himself that he studied the human soul, attributing his own very peculiar and variegated characteristics to his fictitious creations.

Stendhal first published books of travel and criticism: *Rome, Naples and Florence* (1814), *Vie de Haydn* (1814), *Histoire de la peinture en Italie* (1817). He was a psychologist in his *L'Amour* (1822), a romanticist critic in *Racine et Shakespeare* (1824), a "reporter" in his *Promenades dans Rome* (1829). He wrote in 1831 his first novel, *Le Rouge et le Noir, chronique, de 1830*. The title is enigmatical, but seems to designate the struggle or conflict between the revolutionary and military spirit (*le rouge*) and the ecclesiastic spirit (*le noir*). The hero of this novel, Julien Sorel, is the son of a peasant, a carpenter by trade. The child has been brought up to be a priest; but his vocation is not a true one, he is ambitious, and by the "noir" he hopes to reach the "rouge." Chosen as tutor by M. de Rênal, leader of the ultra party at Verrières in the department of Doubs, he pushes himself so successfully that he obtains a

scholarship in the Besançon seminary and later the position of secretary to the Marquis de la Mole. He then abandons the cassock, and becomes lieutenant of hussars. He is about to marry Mlle de la Mole, when he learns that Mme de Rénal, his former benefactress, is trying to prejudice the marquis against him. He leaves for Verrières, shoots at Mme de Rénal in church, during mass, is arrested, and judged. The action of this novel is not very coherent, and its value lies in the minute analysis of the characters, in a style which is firm and precise, ironical and cruel.

In 1839 appeared *La Chartreuse de Parme*, the action of which takes place in Italy, which had now become Stendhal's adopted country. It is the description of a small Italian court in 1815. The hero, Fabrice, this time turns from the "rouge" to the "noir," as he begins as a soldier, is present at the battle of Waterloo (1), returns to Italy, gives himself to all sorts of intrigue and pleasure, and ends by becoming a priest.

Stendhal had written: "I shall be successful about 1880." He felt, in fact, to what extent his fine psychology and superficial irony would be unappreciated amid all the romanticist uproar. But he spoke even better than he knew, for *stendhalisme* has become a sort of snobbery. The unquestioned influence of Stendhal upon critics like Taine and novelists like Paul Bourget was fortunate, but ought not to be exaggerated as it is.

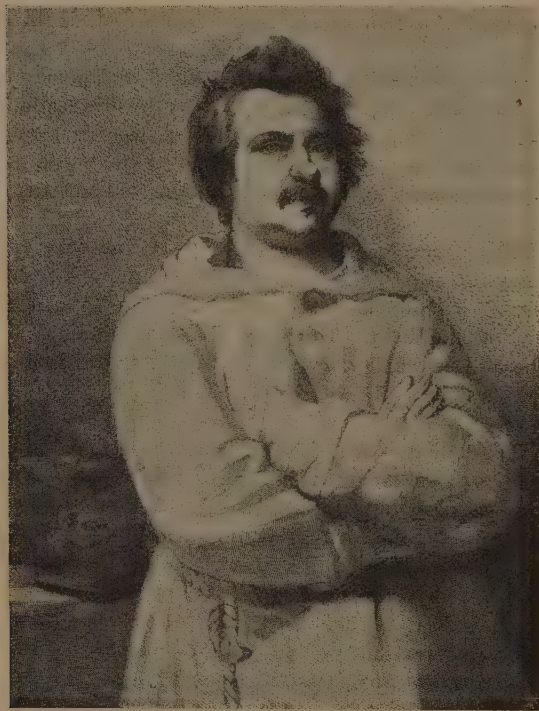
**HONORÉ DE BALZAC** (1799-1850). — An attorney's clerk at first, and then clerk to a notary, Balzac was obsessed by an irresistible vocation for literature. He began by writing absurd novels of adventure, then turned printer, was obliged to sell out in 1827, and from that time was so deeply in debt that, despite his heroic labour, he never succeeded in becoming solvent. His average daily work was fourteen hours; he never slept except between seven o'clock in the evening and one in the morning; he incessantly drank, or munched, coffee to keep himself awake. The correction of his proofs took more time than the writing of the novel, because he constantly lengthened the original by writing on the immense margins of his eight or ten successive proofs. He was absolutely candid, his exulting pride was so naïve that it disarmed criticism, he lived with his imaginary heroes, and was as chimerical in his daily life as he was realistic in his novels. He frequently conceived new ideas for paying off his debts which, when put into execution, only ruined him a little more. He was hardly fifty-one years of age when he died;—and he had just married the Countess Hanska, whom he had loved from afar for sixteen years, and with whom he had exchanged admirable letters.

We shall leave aside his numerous early novels and give our attention to the long series he wrote between 1829 and 1850, which he himself called *La Comédie*

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1299.

die humaine, and which he subdivided into *Scènes de la vie privée*, *Scènes de la vie de province*, *Scènes de la vie parisienne*, *Études philosophiques*, etc. His most remarkable works are: *Eugénie Grandet*, *Le Lys dans la Vallée*. *Le Père Goriot*, *La Cousine Bette*, *Le Cousin Pons*, *Les Chouans*, *Le Médecin de campagne*,

*Les Paysans*, *La Peau de chagrin*, *La Recherche de l'absolu*. Though these novels do not form episodes in one long story, Balzac often reintroduces the same types, such as Eugène de Rastignac, the self-pushing young man; financiers like the Baron de Nucingen, Fraissier, Gobseck; the parvenu, Philippe Bridau; the journalist, Lucien de Rubempré; the physician, Horace Bianchon; the escaped convict, Vautrin, etc. Among his finest creations, we should mention Grandet, the miser; Cousin Pons, the fanatical collector; Goriot, the type of the weak father, who deprives himself for his children and dies on straw-mattress; César Birotteau, the perfumer, type of the rich merchant towards 1840; the famous Gaudisart, the commercial tra-



BALZAC IN HIS DRESSING GOWN

From the portrait painted by Louis Boulanger (1867).

veller; Balthazar Claes, the inventor; Mme de Mortsauf, the heroic woman; Mme de Nucingen, the vain and extravagant great lady, etc. Balzac excels in making his most unimportant characters live: Maman Vauquer, who keeps the boarding-house where Père Goriot lodges, is complete and convincing (1).

Balzac is, perhaps, along with Molière—and dare we say with Shakespeare himself—one of the greatest “creators of souls.” He seems to have known

(1) *Moreaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 557; 2nd cycle, p. 1307.

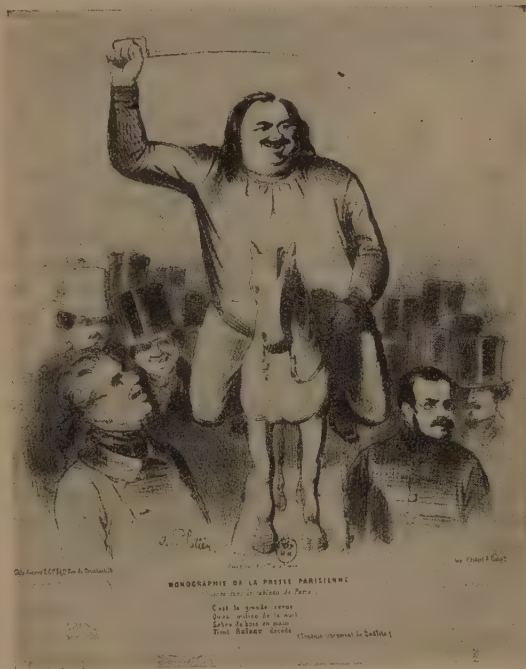


all his characters himself in their own milieu, the princely hôtel or the foul den, the fashionable boulevard or the sinister alley, with their own costumes and gestures; this is not merely Portrait painting, it is the coloured cinematograph. He has heard them all speak, each, with his own accent, provincial or foreign, and his own style of speech, the style which is "the man himself," with his own locutions and characteristic figures of speech. And in reading his works, we too seem to have lived with his characters, and we never forget them. In the case of Balzac, this faculty of observation was the gift of genius, and altogether strange; for he had seen much less of the world than Dumas, George Sand or Hugo. But some people live in the world seeing and remembering nothing, while with others, one rapid, furtive glance will leave accurate visions and ineffaceable images.

Let those who will criticise the construction of Balzac's novels. The plots are sometimes awkward and melodramatic; but, examined from the point of view of character development, they are perfect; for Balzac, like Molière, cared for but one thing only: to bring

about situations which were necessary to develop in succession all the phases of his characters. He puts them through a series of reactions which are intended to bring out all the elements of their nature.

When Balzac describes, analyses or makes his characters speak, he is an excellent writer; we see or hear; it is not Balzac, but life itself. But he is not so good when he is enlarging on his own social, moral and literary ideas. Then he



BALZAC PASSING IN REVIEW THE CHARACTERS  
IN THE *Comédie Humaine*.

C'est la grande revue  
Qu'au milieu de la nuit.  
Sabre de bois en main  
Tient Balzac décédé.

From a lithograph by Platten.

becomes embarrassed, his sentences halt, and he attempts to be witty and eloquent.

Balzac tried his hand at plays, and we have elsewhere spoken of these interesting experiments, especially of *Mercadet* (1).

**MÉRIMÉE** (1803-1870). — In opposition to the grandiose and surcharged work of Balzac, we find that of Mérimée, distinguished in the midst of romanticism by its excessive tendency to conciseness and cold reality. Prosper Mérimée began by mystifying the romanticists in publishing his *Théâtre de Clara Gazul* (1825), of which we have already spoken (2), and his *Guzla*, supposed choice selection of unlyrical poetry (1827). He afterwards produced a historical novel in the style of Vigny, *La Chronique du règne de Charles IX* (1829), which is not the best of his works. He then published, between 1829 and 1840, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and the *Revue de Paris*, a series of tales, the most celebrated of which are : *L'Enlèvement de la redoute*; *La Partie de trictrac*, *La Vénus d'Ille*, *Matteo Falcone*. His longer tales were *Colomba* (1840) and *Carmen* (1847) (3).

*Colomba* unites all the precise and restrained qualities of Mérimée's style with something more, which we rarely find in his work, because he deliberately avoided it : namely, a certain amount of warmth and passion, evolved from the subject itself. It is the story of a Corsican vendetta. *Colomba* is the daughter of Colonel della Robia, assassinated, she thinks, by Barricini, the head of a rival family. Orso, *Colomba's* brother, an officer in the *chasseurs de la garde*, on half-pay, returns to Corsica; and among the passengers on the same boat are an English colonel, Lord Nelvil, and his daughter Lydia. Orso falls in love with Lydia, who fills all his thoughts. But no sooner has he landed, than *Colomba* reminds him of his duty : vengeance for their father. Orso kills the two sons of old Barricini, who had waylaid him in order to murder him. He finally marries Lydia Nelvil. This short novel is a masterpiece of composition, moral analysis and style (4).

**GUSTAVE FLAUBERT** (1821-1880). — The son of a surgeon in the Rouen hospital, Gustave Flaubert possibly inherited from his father a certain scientific turn of mind, and the sang-froid with which he is able to analyse the worst spiritual conditions. Well off and independent, he made some wonderful journeys with his friend, Maxime du Camp, in Greece, Syria and Egypt;

(1) Cf. p. 849.

(2) Cf. p. 766.

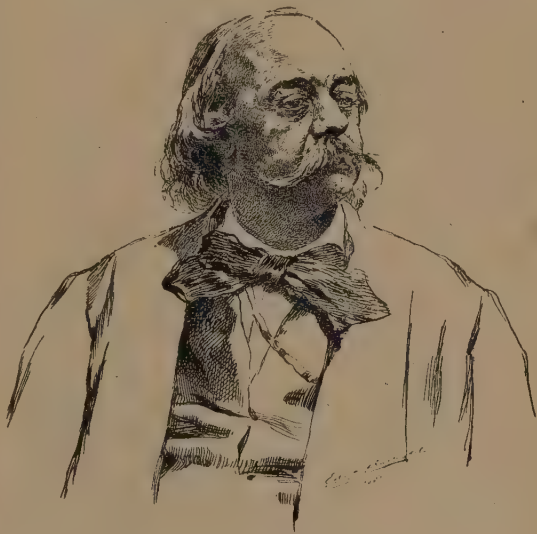
(3) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 549; 2nd cycle, p. 1320.

(4) Mérimée has other claims on our gratitude. He was one of the first to introduce Russian literature into France. Also, as inspector of fine arts, he contributed more than any one else towards preserving the finest mediæval remains by having them classified as historical monuments. (See the notice by M. H. Lion, at the beginning of the *Pages choisies* of MÉRIMÉE, Colin).

and then settled in his country house at Croisset, where he wrote most of his novels.

*Madame Bovary*, published in the *Revue de Paris* in 1857, is the very simple and heart-rending story of a misunderstood, sentimental and sinful woman, who ends by poisoning herself. Her husband, Charles Bovary, is a mediocre man whose insignificance is minutely analysed. The apothecary, Homais, has become the traditional type of bourgeois anti-clericalism. These people are so truthfully drawn that the reader is astonished to find them possessing so little character, and yet standing out in such high relief from the background of the story: the wedding at Rouault's farm, the agricultural meeting at Yonville, the death and burial of Emma Bovary, etc. The other characters belong to that average humanity with which Flaubert's realism exclusively deals (1).

But Flaubert, who was an absolute realist in *Madame Bovary*, afterwards wrote an historical, archæological and exotic novel, *Salamambo* (1862). The superb background of this novel is Carthage in the time of the



FLAUBERT

From a drawing by Liphart.

Punic wars, and the surrounding country where the revolt of Hamilcar's mercenaries broke out. The plot, rather loosely constructed, is based on the love of Matho, the Lybian chief, for Salamambo, Hamilcar's daughter. A reading of this novel with its intense and rich archæological exactitude, at first enchants, but soon fatigues. Furthermore, impassibility, which suits modern, popular subjects like *Madame Bovary*, seems deliberate shocking brutality in *Salamambo* (2).

*L'Éducation sentimentale* (1869) brings us back to the realistic method, the observation both penetrating and indifferent of bourgeois and aristocratic manners. The characters chosen by Flaubert (for this is the inevitable contradic-

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1329.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 563; 2nd cycle, p. 1333.

tion in realism, that the author *chooses*), are, like Charles Bovary, more or less insignificant; even their stupidity is mediocre. One regrets that Flaubert gave himself so much trouble to write so tiresome a book.

His realism, in fact, was already becoming an unhealthy monomania, as was



ALPHONSE DAUDET

From a photograph by Sartony.

very evident when the first volume of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* appeared in 1881, after his death — a novel which fortunately he had left unfinished. Two perfect imbeciles become acquainted, and uniting their nullity, they collaborate in agriculture and gardening, and then review all human knowledge. We finish by pitying the author for having made such a conscientious analysis of stupidity.

In the romanticist genre, Flaubert had also written *La Tentation de saint Antoine* (1874).

Flaubert will remain famous, especially, as a great writer, in the technical sense of the word. He laboriously constructed perfect sentences.

**JULES** (1830-1870) and **EDMOND** (1822-1896) **DE GONCOURT** wrote a number of novels in collabora-

tion, the best of which is *Renée Mauperin*. They recorded, with scrupulous and superficial fidelity, all their impressions, and then sought a method for making use of these human documents. Their style has colour and originality; it only lacks naturalness. Their critical studies of art and history in the eighteenth century and during the Revolution, are both curious and exasperating in their minuteness. Their *Journal* (8 vols.) is a confused collection of anecdotes of, or rather of gossip about, the writers of the XIX century: it is "criticism in the porter's lodge."



**ALPHONSE DAUDET** (1840-1897). — Daudet is also a realist; but his imagination is romantic, and he created amusing plots. Unlike Flaubert, he preferred picturesqueness, colour, and original silhouettes, and he possessed both an exquisite sensibility and a lively and piquant wit. *Le Petit Chose* (1868), *Jack* (1876) and *Le Nabab* (1879) are masterpieces of observation and poetic treatment. Daudet created the type of Tartarin, of whom *Numa Roumestan* (1880) is the heir. No one has known, as he has, how to condense into a short tale a "tableau," a situation and sentiments; he has given to prose the brilliance and solidity of poetry in those mere sketches entitled *La Chèvre de M. Seguin*, *Les Vieux*, *Le Sous-Préfet aux champs*, *L'Elixir du P. Gaucher*. He is less a realist than an impressionist. He is the French Dickens (1).

**EMILE ZOLA** (1840-1902). — As Balzac had written *La Comédie humaine*, so Émile Zola wished to produce a long work by relating, in several volumes, the history of a single family. Les Rougon-Macquart, under the Second Empire. His idea was no longer to study the abstract, metaphysical and moral man, in accordance with some philosophical or artistic method, but to replace the individual in the midst of hereditary laws, deformations; etc., as revealed by science. This is the *experimental* novel, in the sense of the word intended by a Claude Bernard or a Taine. Furthermore, Zola has none of the indifferent naturalism of Flaubert; he defined art as "La Nature vue à travers un tempérament."

In his best novels, *L'Assommoir* (1877), and *Germinal* (1885), Zola appears as an artist with a powerful and brutal talent. If he had not, like Rabelais, "mingled garbage with his writings," we could more easily praise the striking and robustly developed poetry in certain pages of his work, for this naturalist had romantic visions. The strike in *Germinal*, the railroad accident in *La Bête humaine*, the cavalry charge in *La Débâcle*, the procession in *Lourdes*, unite precision of detail with rare power of vivid expression.

**GUY DE MAUPASSANT** (1850-1893) is remarkable for a gift of observation which equals Flaubert's and a style more supple and concise. But he is unmoral to the point of not knowing when he is immoral, and he spoils his best books by a cold cynicism, which is unworthy of his great talent.

His chief novels are *Pierre et Jean* (1888), *Fort comme la Mort* (1889). Besides these he wrote a great number of short stories.

**FERDINAND FABRE** (1830-1902), devoted his vigorous talent almost exclusively to the portrayal of ecclesiastical manners (*L'Abbé Tigrane*, *Ma Vocation*, etc.).

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 575; 2nd cycle, p. 1351

## IV. — THE IDEALISTIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVEL.

The historical novel was partly romantic in its taste for local colour and extravagant adventures. The idealistic novel owes its more personal character, and one might say, its lyricism, to the romantic school. Furthermore, it bor-

rows from the romanticists their theories on the rights of passion, their social antitheses, in short, all their moral utopia. George Sand, in her first and second phases, represents this form of the idealistic novelist. Then the genre matured, no longer meriting its title except for its leaning towards sentimental subjects, its choice of distinguished characters (were they even peasants), and its elegant and poetic style.



GEORGE SAND IN MASCULINE ATTIRE  
From the lithograph by Julien

**GEORGE SAND (1804-1876).** — George Sand was the pseudonym of Lucile-Aurore Dupin. She passed most of her childhood at Nohant with her grandmother, Mme Dupin, daughter of the famous Maurice de Saxe, and widow of the financier, Dupin de Francueil. George Sand's father, Maurice Dupin, was a

brilliant officer in the imperial army, who was killed by a fall from his horse in 1808. The orphan was profoundly impressed in her earliest years by the country of Berry where Nohant is situated, and which she was to describe so well later on. She played with the little peasants; and at Nohant, like Chateaubriand at Combourg, she, too, had her hours of reverie and despair, and began to scribble stories. She was placed in the English convent in Paris between 1817 and 1820, after which she spent two years at Nohant running about, dreaming

and writing, and above all, reading the philosophers and poets. A marriage was arranged for her, in 1822, with Baron Dudevant; and two children had been born of this union when the parents were legally separated. Baroness Dudevant went to Paris to earn her living, and began to write novels. She wrote her first book, *Rose et Blanche*, in collaboration with Jules Sandeau. In 1831, she published, under the name of George Sand, her novel *Indiana*.

George Sand's work was divided into four phases: 1° From about 1831 to 1840, she wrote romantic and fantastic novels, in which glorified love struggles against laws and prejudices: *Indiana* (1831), *Valentine* (1832), *Lélia* (1834) and *Mauprat* (1837), etc. 2° From about 1840 to 1845, she published socialistic and mystical novels, written under the influence of the ideas of Lamennais and Pierre Leroux: *Spiridion* (1840), *Le Compagnon du Tour de France* (1840), *Consuelo* (1842), *Le Meunier d'Angibault* (1845), etc. 3° Her rural novels. In 1844 she had already published *François le Champi*; and this was followed by *La Mare au diable* (1848), *La Petite Fadette* (1848) and *Les Maîtres Sonneurs* (1852). 4° Finally, George Sand returned to the fantastic, worldly novel, but without those theories of passion and feminine independence which characterised her earlier books. She then published *Les Beaux Messieurs de Bois-Doré* (1858), *Le Marquis de Villemer* (1860), a few tales, and her somewhat complacent autobiography, *Histoire de ma vie* (1).

All George Sand's novels are animated by an idealism which includes, in various proportions according to the epoch, passionate love, sentimental philanthropy, and nature. Her conception of love is far-fetched and dangerous, but is based on the fact that in many marriages (for instance, her own), too much attention is paid to interest and not enough to love. Doubtless, she could have preached resignation and sacrifice rather than revolt; but, at least, she attributed to passion something mysterious and divine which prevents its being confused with mere caprice.—Her human socialism is more old-fashioned. The claims of workmen and peasants nowadays are less sentimental and more practical. George Sand is superior and sometimes incomparable in her descriptions of nature. She observes it with tenderness and exquisite delight; and, far from investing nature with her own soul, and her own proud personality, she loses herself in contemplation of nature's beauty. Nothing, however, could be clearer than her descriptions of Auvergne and the Berry, and her sensitiveness does not interfere at all with calm observation and a sure artistic touch. Perhaps she idealised the peasant, but generally she only simplified him, having found in reality all the qualities she idealised.

Concerning the art of George Sand, we can only adopt the opinion of M. S. Rocheblave: "In this writer of genius, the "author" does not exist. Do not seek in George Sand a school, or a master, or a genre; here is only a

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 567; 2nd cycle, p. 1338.

woman who observed her own life, and gave it expression in a language heaven gave her for the purpose. She wrote as she breathed. Is it surprising that she created a language after her own image, that she revealed to our enchanted eyes the stream of her limpid eloquence which, like a beautiful, calm river, gives back the placid reflection of everything along its banks (1) ? ”

**JULES SANDEAU** (1814-1883) revealed a gift for mingling fancy with the portrayal of contemporary manners in his *Mademoiselle de la Seiglière* (1848), and *Sacs et Parchemins* (1851). Both these novels have been adapted for the stage with the collaboration of Emile Augier, the first under the same title, the second under the title of *Le Gendre de M. Poirier*.

**OCTAVE FEUILLET** (1822-1890) wrote : *Le Roman d'un jeune homme pauvre* (1858), *L'Histoire de Sybille* (1862), *M. de Camors* (1867), *Julia de Tréceur* (1872), *Honneur d'artiste* (1890); and the following plays : *Dalila* (1857), *Chamillac* (1886), and several short pieces.—His heroes are always people of fashion, whom he excels in portraying without either dislike or approval. At first somewhat too sentimental and romantic, he displayed power and even depth in *M. de Camors* and *Julia de Tréceur*.

**ANDRÉ THEURIET** (1833-1906) is the painter of the forests of France, which he uses as a poetic background for his bourgeois romantic plots. His principal novels are : *Le Mariage de Gérard*, *Raymonde*, *La Maison des deux Barbeaux*, *Amour d'antan*, etc.

## V. — CONTEMPORARY NOVELISTS.

Contemporary novelists are still more difficult than the foregoing authors to classify definitely. We shall merely note :

**PAUL BOURGET**, (born in 1852) master at the present time of the psychological novel. His first books were : *Cruelle Énigme* (1885), *Mensonges* (1887), which did not foretell his evolution towards the study of contemporary moral problems. The genius of a novelist lies in his capacity to seize upon those passionate situations which bear relation to new laws or to new social needs. In this genre Bourget has produced his masterpieces : *Le Disciple*, *L'Étape*, *Un Divorce* and

(1) *Pages choisies de GEORGE SAND* ; Introduction, p. xxxi (Paris, Colin).



*L'Émigré*. We should not forget that he is also the author of *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*, three volumes of criticism which rank him with Sainte-Beuve and Taine (1).

**PIERRE LOTI** (born in 1850) (pseudonym of Julien Viaud).—Loti represents nowadays the exotic novel. Being sailor he has travelled extensively, and has received profound impressions of the landscapes and manners of wonderful countries. His plots are of no importance; but he knows perfectly the characteristics of Japanese or Turkish psychology. He excels especially in his descriptions of nature for which he has created a special style, full of colour and as fresh as it is brilliant. He is perhaps the most original of living French writers. His best known novels are: *Le Mariage de Loti*, *Mon Frère Yves*, *Pêcheur d'Islande*, *Japaneries d'automne*, *Ramuntcho*, *Vers Ispahan*, etc. (2).



PIERRE LOTI

From a photograph by Benque.

**RENÉ BAZIN** (born in 1853) is remarkable for the powerful simplicity of his plots and style. Like Bourget, he has analysed some of the spiritual conditions of modern society, especially in his *La Terre qui meurt* and *Le Blé qui lève*.

**MAURICE BARRÈS** (born in 1862), is classed among the novel writers because he has chosen the outline of the novel to expose his thoughts. In reality M. Barrès is a philosopher and a politician; his works, of an exquisite literary form, have chiefly influenced the intelligence and the heart of the French society, from about 1880 up to the present day.

(1) *Morceaux choisis*, 2nd cycle, p. 1359.

(2) *Morceaux choisis*, 1st cycle, p. 584; 2nd cycle, p. 1367.

His three first novels are an account of the theory he has himself called *le Culte du moi*; *Sous l'œil des Barbares* (1888); *Un Homme libre* (1889); *le Jardin de Bérénice* (1891). M. Barrès calls "Barbares" not those who were ironically named bourgeois, "philistins", by the romantics and whom they opposed to the "artistes"; for him the "Barbares" are those who have a « moi » different from our; we must strive hard to get free from the influence of others, to improve and develop our "moi."

Afterwards we must pass on to activity and M. Barrès has himself given the example by entering into public life. He then published *l'Ennemi des Lois* (1893), and *Une Journée parlementaire* (a drama, 1894).

Under the collective title *Roman de l'énergie nationale*, he wrote three of his best books in which can be found all the experience of his political and literary life: *les Déracinés* (1897), in which he protests against centralization; *l'Appel au soldat* (1900) et *Leurs figures* (1902); these two volumes contain the psychology of the "boulangisme" and of Dreyfus' law suit.

More and more M. Barrès constitutes himself the counsel of the "nationalisme" against the influence of the foreigners or of the "radicalisme." He prepared the hearts for the great endeavours the war of 1914 was to require, by publishing *Au service de l'Allemagne* (1906); *Colette Baudoche* (1909); *la Colline inspirée* (1913).

The events found him quite ready for a powerful and lasting influence.

As deputy and journalist, as president of the "Ligue des Patriotes", M. Barrès delivered many speeches and wrote a large number of eloquent articles; the chief part of them can be found in the six volumes called "*l'Ame française et la Guerre*".

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PAGE ORNAMENT

From a romanticist edition of *Notre-Dame-de-Paris*.



DECORATIVE FRIEZE TAKEN FROM A ROMANTICIST BOOK

## CHAPTER XII

### TABLE OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE GENRES

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DECORATED LETTER

IN this table, we do not intend to deal scientifically with the question of the evolution of the genres. We shall simply arrange in groups, for the use of the students, the definitions, characteristics, and modifications of the principal literary genres.

#### I.—THE EPIC.

**Definition and Characteristics.**—The epic is the poetic and marvellous form which young nations instinctively give to history. The epic usually made its appearance after some great event, some victory celebrated by the nation, or some disaster for which it sought consolation. At first it was short, beginning as a brief poem, both narrative and lyrical in nature (the song, the *cantilène*, the Spanish romance), and passing from mouth to mouth; and was a song of the vigil or the battle. The epic then resulted from the juxtaposition and fusion of several of these poems relating to the same hero; and to this hero (Achilles, Siegfried, Charlemagne) were attributed other songs which had at first been consecrated to



another forgotten hero. In this way was formed what is called the natural or spontaneous epic (1).

Other epics were then written, with an art which imitated the first examples, and which were destined to be read. The subject of such an epic was some national exploit, and its hero one of the founders or restorers of the country, of religion, etc. (Eneas, Godefroy de Bouillon, Henri IV, etc.).

Finally, after a series of great poems written in the traditional epic form, there was a return to the *cantilène* or to the Castilian romance; and short epics were written, (such as Victor Hugo's *Légende des siècles*.)

Whether spontaneous or artificial, the epic generally has the following characteristics :

1° It is an impersonal narrative; in its essential form it excludes lyricism which is found in the *cantilène* and reappears in the short epic (*Légende des siècles*);

2° The subject is historical, but is transformed by legend. It deals always with some event which has vividly impressed the popular imagination, and which, viewed in the proper perspective, becomes both simpler and grander;

3° The hero incarnates the merits and faults of the race he represents; he is a living symbol;

4° In order to explain highly exaggerated exploits, recourse is had to the intervention of divinity; this results in the marvellous, which, in the true epic, arises naturally from the conception itself of superhuman heroism, but which in the artificial epic is merely "machinery";

5° There is little psychology; that is to say, the poet does not seek to explain facts by the sentiments of the characters, but attributes them to fate or to the gods. The heroes express their sentiments only in relation to the facts;

6° The style is naïve, concrete and analytical. Comparisons and metaphors abound, as in tales for children.

**Development in France.**—From the fifth to the eighth century.—Latin and Roman *cantilènes* (pp. 32-35).

*Ninth to tenth century.*—Formation of the *Chansons de geste* (pp. 32-35).

*Tenth to twelfth century.*—Period of the first (?) *Chansons de geste*, written in assonant decasyllabic verse (p. 35): *Roland*, *Aliscans*, *Raoul de Cambrai*. Adaptations of antique epics begin to appear: *Roman de Troie*, *Roman d'Alexandre* (p. 67-68).

*Thirteenth to fourteenth century.*—New rhymed versions of *Chansons de geste*. They are invaded by the romantic and satiric elements (p. 37).

*Fifteenth century.*—New versions in prose of *Chansons de geste*. Then follow

(1) This theory of the epic must be partly modified, if we adopt the conclusions of M. J. Bédier in his *Légendes épiques*. Cf. p. 34.

successive deformations of texts in the course of literary or popular rewriting, down to our own time (p. 37).

*Sixteenth century.*—Appearance of the artificial epic, in Ronsard's *La Franciade* (p. 202).

The epic note is struck in Du Bartas' *La Semaine* (p. 211), and in d'Aubigné's *Les Tragiques* (p. 213).

*Seventeenth century.*—Epics were never more numerous, nor less epical: the *Saint-Louis* of father Lemoyne, the *Alaric* of G. de Scudéry, the *Clovis* of Desmaretz de Saint-Sorlin, and especially Chapelain's *La Pucelle*. These are works of literati. Boileau, in his *Art poétique*, III, reproached his contemporaries with not imitating Homer and Virgil faithfully enough! Never was any critical question more badly set forth (p. 532). Fénelon's *Télémaque* may be classified with epics by reason of its narrative and its marvellous.

*Eighteenth century.*—Voltaire's *La Henriade* owed its success to its contemporary ideas and allusions, and not at all to its epical qualities; and this explains why the poem seems meaningless and insipid to us (p. 588).

*Nineteenth century.*—Romanticism restored the idea of the true epic; but it was felt that the genre had become impossible in a society whose critical spirit was no less developed than its imagination. Chateaubriand wrote, however, a prose epic, *Les Martyrs*, of which the romantic and historic parts are as interesting as the epic and marvellous are artificial and fatiguing (p. 723). To find, if not the complete epic, at least the epic note, we must go to Hugo's *La Légende des siècles*, and Leconte de Lisle's *Poèmes barbares*. But only the impersonal pieces of *La Légende des siècles* should be classified under the epic heading, such as *L'Aigle du casque*, *Le Petit roi de Galice*, *Eviradnus*, *Aymerillot*, etc.

As examples of the epic genre, organised and complete, France possesses only the *Chansons de geste*.

## II.—DIDACTIC POETRY

**Definition and Characteristics.**—*Didactic* comes from a Greek word signifying "To teach". Didactic poetry is written to convey, technical, intellectual, moral knowledge, in a pleasant form, easy to retain. The use of this genre would seem explicable in societies in which philosophers and teachers entrusted their precepts to the memory of their disciples. But literary processes soon slipped in among these didactic poems; teaching became merely a pretext for writing descriptions or displaying virtuosity. On the other hand, authors made use of this easy form to set forth their own social, religious and critical ideas, and *La Satire*, *L'Épître*, sometimes *L'Églogue*, are connected with it.

It is difficult to determine accurately the characteristics of the didactic

genre. It is customary to praise in Virgil's *Georgics*, for instance, the precision of the technical part and the charm of the poetry. The best didactic poem, therefore, is one which instructs us while at the same time affording us literary pleasure.

**Development.**—In the Middle Ages, the didactic genre was represented by *Les Romans du Renart* (p. 77), *Le Roman de la Rose* (p. 69), the first part of which is devoted to the "art of loving" and the second to a satire on society; the *Bestiaires* and *Lapidaires* (p. 75), the *Dits* (p. 75), the *Fabliaux* (p. 82), the *Sirvente* (p. 92), the *Testament* (p. 101), the *Sermon joyeux* (p. 138), the *Monologue* (p. 137), etc. As there was a general mania in the Middle Ages for inculcating lessons everywhere, and using verse with deplorable facility for the least poetic subjects, we may include an infinite number of works in the didactic genre.

**Sixteenth century.**—The genre became better defined, thanks to imitation of the ancients. Marot is didactic (in the mediæval manner) in his *Temple de Cupidon* (p. 187) and in *L'Enfer* (p. 187); the same is true of Marguerite d'Alençon in *Le Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* and other mystic poems (p. 190). Thomas Sibilet (p. 193), and Vauquelin de La Fresnaye (p. 302), wrote *Arts poétiques*. The form of satire became more precise, and assumed its classic form in *Le Poète courtisan* of J. du Bellay (p. 209), and in Ronsard's *Discours* (p. 202). Belleau recalls the *Lapidaires* in his *Amours et échanges des pierres précieuses* (p. 210); Baif wrote his *Météores* and *Mimes* (p. 210). Finally, *La Satyre Ménippée* represents in the freest form a work which is both satirical and oratorical (p. 278).

Perhaps we should also class with didactic poetry the numerous *Églogues*, *Bergeries*, etc., produced in the sixteenth century under the influence of Italy and Spain (Ronsard, Belleau, etc.), and Marot's *Épîtres* (p. 187).

**Seventeenth century.**—Satire was at first represented by Mathurin Régnier (p. 303), and became more didactic with Boileau (p. 522). The *Épître* became less free and less agreeable in the work of Boileau (p. 526) than in that of Marot, but gained in seriousness and eloquence. The masterpiece of the genre is Boileau's *Art poétique* (p. 527), which has all its merits and all its faults. Fables reached their most complete and at the same time their freest form with La Fontaine (p. 512).

**Eighteenth century.**—The eighteenth century, essentially critical and philosophical, versified every subject. Voltaire composed his *Discours sur l'homme* (p. 589), his poems on *Le Désastre de Lisbonne* (id.), on *La Loi naturelle* (590); Louis Racine wrote his *La Grâce* and *La Religion* (p. 667); Roucher and Saint-Lambert, *Les Mois* and *Les Saisons* (p. 667) etc. At the end of the century André Chénier undertook his *Hermès*, which he never finished, and which would have been a sort of Encyclopedia in verse, inspired by genius in some parts, but of which

even the conception is that of a thinker and not of a poet (p. 673). Delille remained the most complete representative of this "didactic fury"; he wrote poems on *Les Jardins*, *L'Homme des Champs*, *La Conversation*; he would have written in verse about the art of writing in prose (p. 714). Satire was written by Voltaire, Gilbert (p. 668), and fables by Florian (p. 668).

*Nineteenth century.*—The great lyrical crisis of romanticism broke for fifty years this untoward didactic tradition. Science, philosophy and history developed of themselves, and in their own proper forms, without being disguised in the artificiality of verse. Possibly the didactic influence of the eighteenth century was still to be seen in certain philosophical pieces by Lamartine (*L'Homme*, *L'Immortalité*); but the subject was always lyrical.

The Parnassians returned to didactic poetry chiefly because they wished to be impersonal and sought plastic beauty. They chose subjects, therefore, which would only be supports or occasions for poetry; they were the disciples of Chénier. Leconte de Lisle was didactic rather than lyrical in a few of his *Poèmes antiques* (p. 759), on India and Greece; Sully Prudhomme was didactic in his *La Justice* and *Le Bonheur* (p. 760).

The didactic genre will always have its partisans. False in itself, and condemned in its definition as being neither altogether instructive nor altogether poetic, it will nevertheless supply certain temperaments, who need to feel themselves sustained by some external subject and who are not psychologists, with backgrounds and occasions for writing verse.

### III. — LYRICAL POETRY.

**Definition and Characteristics.**—Lyricism is properly the impassioned expression of individual sentiments upon common themes. It can be religious (the Psalms), patriotic (Tyrtaeus), heroic (Pindar), moral (Mimnermus, Simonides), amorous (Sapho, Anacreon), etc. To be produced and developed, it has need of favourable conditions: a certain sincerity both in poet and reader; naïveté; impulsiveness; enthusiasm; it can only be addressed to men in whom logic and criticism have not enfeebled their capacity for feeling and responding;—if not, it becomes artificial. This resulted—in the evolution of lyricism—in periods during which only form was preserved, and in which true lyricism, in so far as it is the expression of the writer's own sentiments, took refuge in prose.

Lyrical poetry was, in the beginning, poetry to be sung, under the form of hymns, songs, odes, etc. Thus, it has preserved, above everything, its musical character. It makes use of stanzas and refrains; more than any other genre, it is rhymed and melodious. It moves by impulses and sensations; it is not



confined by logic; it is regulated by the heart of the poet, and obeys the caprices of sensibility and imagination.

This "disorder" in lyric poetry is not, as Boileau thought, an effect of art, but, on the contrary, a natural, intuitive, sensitive, impassioned order, which is different from the deductive or narrative order of the other genres. Whatever its theme, the ode is always subjective, as the poet only sings because he must, and is compelled by his intimate inspiration to express his emotions and impressions. Lyricism, then, is after all the whole of poetry.

**Development.**—*Middle Ages*: Provençal or French lyricism began with the *chanson*. It was subdivided into numerous genres, all of which bear perhaps traces of spontaneous and popular rhythms (pp. 89-94). The troubadours and trouveres expressed rather commonplace sentiments, which quickly became traditional and artificial. If a few of them, like Bertrand de Born (p. 93) sang enthusiastically of war, most were limited to the expression of amour courtois, the fashionable form of mediæval gallantry (p. 93). In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, great events sometimes inspired Eustache Deschamps (p. 95), and Alain Chartier (p. 96); but Charles d'Orléans (p. 98) was only a graceful disciple of the troubadours. Towards the end of the century the lyric poet, in the deepest sense of the word, appeared in Villon (p. 100). His is a truly subjective, genius, and without seeking new subjects he expressed his personal impressions of everyday things—life, youth, love, death, etc.—after the manner of the genuine poet.

*Sixteenth century.*—Lyricism underwent a crisis of formalism in the work of the *rhétoriciens* (p. 180). These were craftsmen who prepared and refined the rhythms and the vocabulary. Marot is a lyric poet inferior indeed to Villon, but whose restrained and melancholy personality gives a truly lyrical note to a few of his poems. He understood the expression of religious sentiments, not only in his translation of the Psalms, but in some of his *Élégies* and *Complaintes* (p. 187). In his imitations of Pindar and Anacreon Ronsard's lyricism was at first artificial; but it became lyrical when he sang of nature and death. But even in his injudicious imitations of ancient poets and the Italians, the sincerity of the poet is evident (pp. 201-208).

Joachim du Bellay is perhaps more lyrical, in the penetrating melancholy of *Les Regrets*, and the solemn and sublime impressions we share with him in his *Les Antiquités de Rome* (p. 209). Lyricism is also apparent in d'Aubigné's *Les Tragiques*, a work inspired by indignation and enthusiasm, and essentially subjective (p. 213).

*Seventeenth century.*—We may say, in a general way, that there was no lyrical poetry during the classical period, except among secondary poets like Théophile de Viau (p. 305), Desportes and Bertaut (p. 302), Maynard, or Racan (p. 301). In spite of the form in which he cast his odes, Malherbe is not a

lyric poet. He represents exactly those impersonal and objective tendencies of a century which was too saturated with logic, general psychology, sociability and politeness, and in which subjective lyricism could not legitimately be developed. Among great poets, neither Corneille, Racine nor Boileau is a lyricist; La Fontaine, alone, is sometimes lyrical, but only for a moment. The great lyricist of the seventeenth century is Bossuet (p. 384).

*Eighteenth century.*—Like the seventeenth, the eighteenth century lacked the lyrical sense. J.-B. Rousseau indeed paraphrased the Psalms, in harmonious rhythms and with some eloquence here and there, but nothing could be less subjective. Even when he addresses his work to his patron, the Count du Luc, he is not personal (p. 669). Le Franc de Pompignan sometimes preserves the Biblical style better than J.-B. Rousseau (p. 670). Gilbert comes nearer true lyricism in his *Adieux à la vie* (p. 686). At the end of the century Chénier resurrected lyricism in a few of his *Elégies*, particularly in his *Iambes*, where he expresses with brilliance and power his personal emotions (p. 672); and Parny, melancholy and impassioned, announces Lamartine (p. 670). But, as Bossuet had been the great lyricist of the seventeenth century, it was again a prose-writer, J.-J. Rousseau, who was the great and only lyricist of the eighteenth (p. 633) century.

*Nineteenth century.* — Chateaubriand, in *Atala*, *René*, *Le Voyage en Amérique*, continued and developed the lyricism of Rousseau. He invented themes which the romanticists had only to versify (p. 721). Lamartine is the lyric poet *par excellence*. Poetry was never more spontaneous, nor sprang from more profound depths of the heart of a man than his. He represents subjective lyricism in its perfection (p. 741-744). Victor Hugo, often equal to Lamartine as a lyric poet, also expressed political and heroic lyricism; less spontaneous than Lamartine in the expression of his intimate thoughts, he renewed the antique ode, and touched with equal success all the chords of the lyre (p. 749). Musset, like Lamartine, excels in the personal and impassioned expression of love (p. 752). Vigny, less enthusiastic, is an "intellectual" lyricist (p. 750). The Parnassians, in spite of their theories, often returned to the true lyrical vein; there is great individuality and sensibility in the work of Leconte de Lisle (p. 758); Sully Prudhomme continued the tradition of Lamartine and Musset in his best poems, *Les Solitudes* and *Vaines Tendresses* (760); while F. Coppée (760) is the lyric poet expressing tender and resigned sentiments, in which he is a disciple of Sainte-Beuve, the first who found poetry in humble lives and daily scenes.

#### IV. — DRAMA.

**Definition and Characteristics.** — Here we find considerable embarrassment in finding definitions. Serious French drama is represented by two per-

fectly distinct genres : the mediæval mystery, and tragedy. The *mystère* is a sacred drama, evolved from church ritual, which passed successively through the following forms : *trope*, *drame liturgique*, *miracle* and *mystère* (p. 108 et seq.). Then suddenly, in the middle of the sixteenth century, it disappeared ; it did not give birth, in changing subjects, to the historical drama, as it did in England ; it was simply abolished. Meanwhile, the first tragedies, imitated from the ancients, were represented before a public composed of students and humanists.

Tragedy, as approximately constituted in Jodelle's first attempt in 1552 (p. 256), and by theorists, consists essentially in the presentation of a moral crisis as near as possible to its conclusion ; it is regulated by the unities of action, time and place ; it has no spectacular interest, and all material action takes place behind the scenes ; we only have on the stage the effects of events upon the psychology of the characters ; the subject is taken from antiquity or from some distant country (we shall see this point modified in the eighteenth century) ; the characters are noble or royal ; the denouement is generally brought about by a catastrophe which causes the death of one or several of the characters, and puts a definite end to the passionate situation ; it thus provokes pity and terror.—The style is logical and oratorical ; it is a sequence of analyses, pleas, and discussions ; it is neither epic nor lyrical, but properly dramatic.

In spite of a few changes, the foregoing are the essential elements of tragedy from 1552 to 1852, from Jodelle's *Cléopâtre* to Ponsard's *Lucrèce*.

**Development.** — *Sixteenth century.* — Classic tragedy, begun in 1552 with Jodelle's *Cléopâtre* (p. 256), seemed to become slightly freer in the plays of Robert Garnier (p. 261) and of Montchrestien (p. 263).

*Seventeenth century.* — Tragedy was menaced by the momentary influence of the pastoral and the tragi-comedy, in the work of Alexandre Hardy (p. 327) and Théophile de Viau (p. 305). But Mairet's *Sophonisbe* in 1634 (p. 330), definitely established its form. Corneille wrote tragedies entirely " according to rule " between 1635 and 1652, and between 1659 and 1674. But his subjects were not always chosen in perfect harmony with the stage, and some of them would have been better perhaps under a more liberal dramatic system (pp. 330-350). The same is true of Rotrou (p. 350). But Racine understood better the relation between the action, the characters and what are called the rules of Aristotle. He " makes something out of nothing ; " that is to say, between the initial fact which determines the crisis, and the denouement, he writes nothing but analyses and conflicts of passion : nothing comes from without, and everything depends upon the resolves or errors of the characters (pp. 450-474).

*Eighteenth century.* — With the work of Crébillon, tragedy was turned

into romantic melodrama, while apparently abiding by the usual rules (p. 658). During the entire century the form of classic tragedy remained untouched, and its style conventional, though it was sometimes rejuvenated in subject or ideas. It was the first dim preparation for the romantic drama. Voltaire wrote for the theatre from 1718 to 1778. He scrupulously respected the framework, and imitates the style of Racine and Quinault. But he borrowed subjects from French history and the history of other nations, near and far, brought about the suppression of the benches which until then had encumbered the stage, defended scenic illusion, and began to initiate the French into the dramas of Shakespeare (pp. 652-655). Besides this, he introduced philosophical ideas into tragedy, and though by so doing he dated his plays, yet in their own time they were only made more intensely vital. Ducis made awkward adaptations from Shakespeare, but created a desire for complete translations (p. 655). During the Revolution and under the Empire, tragedy continued to develop according to the tradition of Voltaire, and, in a desperate effort to survive, assimilated elements not in accordance with its nature; in subject, it became historical drama, but in form persisted in remaining psychological tragedy (M.-J. Chénier, p. 703; N. Lemercier, p. 706; Jouy, p. 707; Raynouard, p. 707).

*Nineteenth century.* — Under this contradictory régime, tragedy got worn out, and perished. Melodrama (pp. 716 and 748) is popular tragedy, disdaining all the rules. Under the double influence of historical tragedy and melodrama the romantic drama was born (pp. 763-781), which broke all the rules of tragedy, but preserved its terror and pity and its noble style.

Despite the overwhelming success of romantic drama, tragedy was not yet altogether resigned to death. It still gave a few signs of life, notably in the *Lucrèce* by Ponsard, in 1842 (p. 781). But it was doomed, and drama in verse, slightly improved—definitely triumphed in the theatre with the work of Ponsard himself (p. 781), H. de Bornier, Coppée, and others (p. 782).

## V. — COMEDY AND THE BOURGEOIS PLAY.

**Definition and Characteristics.** — The object of comedy was the absurdities and manias of humanity, and generally it aimed at exciting laughter. From the standpoint of comedy, humanity is composed of people who are more foolish than they are wicked, more unconscious than perverse, more vain than ferocious, and to correct them, it is sufficient to ridicule their faults. The field of comedy is wide. Sometimes it is confined to the merely external conflicts of human stupidity, and is then a comedy of intrigue. Sometimes it presents a satirical picture of contemporary society (comedy of manners); or, again, it goes deeper and portrays some eccentricity symbolised by a central character (character comedy). Comedy can only be comical by not treating its



subjects seriously, and when its denouement causes pleasure without terror; but it can be comedy without exciting laughter.

In this way comedy may moralise, and be at times pathetic, but is distinct from tragedy.

**Development.** — In the Middle Ages comedy did not make its appearance until about the middle of the thirteenth century, with the *Jeu de la Feuillée* and *Robin et Marion* by Adam de la Halle. There was no comedy in the fourteenth century. In the fifteenth we find the *farce*, the *moralité* and the *sotie*. This development is very curious; there must have been a whole repertory in the fourteenth century which, perhaps, may be some day discovered. But, in any event, true mediæval comedy, which contains the germ of the comedy of intrigue, of character and of manners, is the *farce* (p. 128). In this genre we have a masterpiece, *Pathelin* (p. 128). The *moralité* (p. 132) is too much in the allegorical taste of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; the *sotie* (p. 135) is a political pamphlet without the genius of an Aristophanes, that is to say, of no value whatever.

*Sixteenth century.* — The *farce*, influenced by antiquity and by the Italians, was slowly transformed, strengthened, purified, and became comedy. Though we can say that there is no continuity between *farce* and comedy, it was from Italy that we received, with the adaptations made by Pierre Larivey (p. 265), our models for classic comedy.

*Seventeenth century.* — Dramatists continued to imitate the Italians, and then the Spaniards. This resulted in comedies full of buffoonery and coarseness, and sometimes affectation, in which the protagonists are mischievous valets or ridiculous bullies. Rotrou, Scarron and Boisrobert worked in this genre (pp. 477-478). But Corneille inaugurated the comedy of “*honnêtes gens*” with his *Mélite* (p. 335), and produced, before Molière, an excellent comedy of manners, *Le Menteur*. Molière (pp. 480-503) first imitated the Italians and fashionable contemporaries; then, leaving his models behind, and resuming the traditions of the ancient *farce*, he created the classic comedy, of plot, manners and characters, more decent than the *farce*, more profound than the Italian comedy, more accurate, human and moral. His influence was so powerful that it transformed comedy for nearly a century.

*Eighteenth century.* — A whole group of writers imitated Molière: Regnard (p. 656), Dancourt (p. 658), Dufresny, Piron, Gresset (pp. 658-659). But these disciples gave up character study for plot and manners. The result is that their plays are merely pleasing, or old-fashioned. Only one has genius, namely Le Sage, who was as profound as Molière in his *Turcaret* (p. 658). Comedy was modified in the plays of Marivaux; it might be said that it changed its pole. Ingenious, unconscious love became the graceful and piquant theme, and women, especially young girls, had the principal parts (p. 659).

With Beaumarchais a new form appeared; politics crept in. Refined society between 1730 and 1760 liked especially *marivaudage*; but the Revolution was drawing near, and playwrights sought new means of success in satire and allusions (p. 662). There was also a tendency to moralise. A frivolous and free-thinking society was tired of its own vices; virtue must make its appearance somewhere, so it was placed on the stage. This resulted in the tearful comedy as treated by Destouches and La Chaussée (p. 663). Finally, another result was the bourgeois play, for which Diderot had advanced his theory (p. 664). People were tired of the fixed genres, which had produced their masterpieces, and efforts were being made to rejuvenate them by a sort of mixture of genres. Diderot especially demanded that social conditions should be portrayed rather than characters.

*Nineteenth century.* — After a period during which comedy was nothing more than a pamphlet, dramatists returned to the depiction of manners in the person of Picard (p. 708), Duval (p. 709), Etienne (p. 710). Dumas *père* created historical comedy (p. 850), and was followed by Scribe (p. 848), who also excelled in the comedy of intrigue. But, as the public became more and more interested in political and social questions, these were introduced on the stage and discussed. Emile Augier (p. 851), later on Dumas *fils* (p. 853), followed by a crowd of imitators, used in their plays such themes as misalliances, marriage, divorce, etc. With Sardou (p. 857) there was a return to the historical genre and the amusing plot, and with Pailleron (p. 858) to the pleasing comedy of manners. — A naturalist reaction appeared with Henri Becque (p. 858) and the Théâtre-Libre (p. 859), and idealistic reaction with Edmond Rostand (p. 859).

## VI. — THE NOVEL.

The novel was at first a narrative in popular language (p. 56). But it became, in the twelfth century, the chivalric novel, with Chrétien de Troyes, the legends of Tristan, of the Holy Grail, etc. (pp. 56-63). Beside these *courtois* novels, should be mentioned the novels based on Byzantine, Greek and other legends. These works, like the *Chansons de geste*, were continually rehandled and brought up to date. In the sixteenth century, there were not so many; only new adaptations of preceding novels were made. But among novels may be classified *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* (p. 249). — The seventeenth century introduced a new development of the genre. The *Astrée*, by Honoré d'Urfé (p. 148), the novels with a key by Mlle de Scudéry (p. 443), novels of adventure (p. 442), realistic novels by Scarron and Furetière (p. 444), idealistic novels, like the *Princesse de Clèves* (p. 446), were the delight of polite society. — The eighteenth century added to these a finer gift of direct observation of manners as in

the work of LeSage (p. 638) and Marivaux (p. 640); a deeper and more sensitive analysis of passion, as in that of Prévost (p. 640) and Rousseau, (p. 628). On the other hand, the novel became a vehicle for theses in the hands of Voltaire (p. 595) and Marmontel (p. 642).—In the nineteenth century the development of the novel was enormous, and masterpieces were produced in all the genres, from Chateaubriand (pp. 721-736), Mme de Staël (p. 732) and Benjamin Constant (p. 865) to novels by Balzac (p. 873), Flaubert (p. 876) and George Sand (p. 880). In our days the field of the novel has been still further enlarged by the discussion of social problems, and the depiction of tropical countries (p. 883).

It should be noted that, of all the literary genres, the novel has been the most extensively affected by foreign influences:—by Celtic and Byzantine influences in the Middle Ages; by Italy and Spain in the seventeenth century; by England in the eighteenth, and by Germany and Russia in the nineteenth century.



PAGE ORNAMENT

Taken from a romanticist book.





## SYNOPTICAL TABLES

Dates.	Epic and Romances.	Lyricism.	Theatre.	Other genres of poetry.
IX CENTURY.				
X CENTURY.				
XI CENTURY	<i>Pèlerinage de Charlemagne</i> (1060). <i>Chanson de Roland</i> (1080). <i>Chanson d'Antioche</i> (1098).			<i>Vie de saint Léger. Cantilène de sainte-Eulalie.</i>  <i>Vie de saint Alexis.</i>
XII CENTURY. 1100.	<i>Tristan, of Bérout.</i> <i>Couronnement de Louis.</i> <i>Charroi de Nîmes.</i> <i>Roman d'Enée.</i>		<i>Les Vierges folles.</i>	
1150	<i>Roman de Brut,</i> of <b>Robert Wace</b> (1155). <i>Roman de Troie.</i> of <b>B. de Sainte-More. <i>Lais</i> of <b>Marie de France</b> (1160). <i>Roman de Rou,</i> of <b>Robert Wace</b> (1161-1174). <i>Aliscans.</i> <i>Roman d'Alexandre.</i> <i>Tristan,</i> of <b>Thomas</b> (1180). <i>Lancelot, le Chevalier au Lion, Perceval,</i> of <b>Chrétien de Troyes</b> (1180-90). <b>Chrétien de Troyes</b> (d. 1195).</b>	<b>Conon de Béthune</b> (d. 1224).	<i>Le Jeu de saint Nicolas,</i> of <b>Jean Bodel</b> (1170).  <i>Drame d'Adam</i>	<i>Richeut</i> (fabliau).    <i>Fables of Marie de France,</i>
XIII CENTURY. 1200.	<i>Girard de Vienne.</i> <i>Aimeri de Narbonne.</i> <i>Quête du Graal.</i>	<b>Jean Bodel.</b>  <b>Thibaut de Champagne</b> (d. 1240).		<i>Roman de Renart</i>  <i>The Fabliaux.</i>   <i>Roman de la Rose</i> (first part), by <b>Guillaume de Lorris</b> (d. 1237).
1250	<i>Raoul de Cambrai</i> (1270).	<b>Rutebeuf</b> (d. 1287).	<i>Jeu de la Feuille,</i> of <b>Adam de la Halle</b> (1262).  <i>Robin et Marion,</i> of <b>Adam de la Halle</b> (1283). <i>Miracle de Théophile,</i> of <b>Rutebeuf</b> (1284). <b>Adam de la Halle</b> (1288).	<i>Roman de la Rose</i> (second part), by <b>Jean de Meung</b> (1277).

eology hilosophy.	History.	Sciences and Arts.	Foreign Literatures.	Political Synchronisms.
	<i>The Strasbourg Oaths</i> (842).	Alcuin (d. 840).		Treaty of Verdun (842).  The conquest of England by the Normans (1066).  First Crusade (1095).
ard (d. 1142).				Second Crusade (1147). Frédéric Barbarossa (1152-1190).
Bernard d. 1153).		Notre-Dame de Paris (1160).	<i>Poème du Cid</i> (Spain) (1140).	
ons of Mau- e de Sully (1196).				Philip II (Augustus) (1180-1223).  Third Crusade (1189-1192).  Innocent III (1198).
elation of the mons of St. rnard (1210).	Villehardouin (d. 1213).	Foundation of the Paris University.	<i>Les Nibelungen</i> (Germany).	Fourth Crusade (1204). The war of the Albigenses (1209).  Bouvines (1214), The Great Charter (1215).  First Crusade of St. Louis (1248).
Somme théolo- que of St. Tho- as Aquinas.				
t. Thomas (d. 1274).	French Redaction of the <i>Grandes Chroniques de Saint-Denis</i> Ma- thieu de Ven- dôme (1275).			St. Louis dies in Tunis (1270).  The Sicilian Vespers (1282).
oger Bacon (d. 1294).				

Dates.	Religious Drama.	Comedy.	Diverse genres of poetry.	History.
XIV CENTURY. 1300.	<i>Miracles de Notre-Dame</i> (1340).		<b>Jean de Meung</b> (d. 1305.)  Les Jeux floraux de Toulouse (1325)  <i>Renart</i> <i>le Contrefait</i> (1340).	<i>Vie de saint</i> by Joinville  Joinville (d.
1350	<i>The Confrères de la Passion</i> (1398).		<b>Guillaume de Machaut</b> (d. 1377).	Chronique of <b>Le Bel</b> (1370)  <b>Froissart</b> his <i>Chron</i> (1370)
XV CENTURY. 1400.	King gives letters patent to the <i>Confrères</i> (1402).		<b>Eustache Deschamps</b> (d. 1410). <b>Charles d'Orléans</b> is taken prisoner at Agincourt (1415). <b>Charles d'Orléans</b> at Blois (1441). <b>Alain Chartier</b> (d. 1449).	<b>Froissart</b> (1370)
1450	<i>The Passion</i> by <b>Arnould Gréban</b> (1452).  <i>Mystère de Troie</i> , by <b>Jacques Millet</b> (1452).  <i>The Passion</i> by <b>Jean Michel</b> (1486).  <i>Saint Martin</i> , by <b>A. de la Vigne</b> (1496).	<i>The Cleres de la Basoche.</i> <i>The Enfants sans souci.</i>  <i>Maître Pathelin</i> (1470).	<i>Petit Testament</i> of <b>Villon</b> (1436).  <i>Grand Testament</i> of <b>Villon</b> (1461). <b>Charles d'Orléans</b> (d. 1465).  <b>Villon</b> (d. 1480?)	<b>Commines</b> out of fav gins his res.



Ecclesiastic Works Translations.	Theology and Philosophy.	Sciences and Arts.	Foreign Literatures.	Historical Synchronisms
	<p><b>Duns Scott</b> (d. 1304).</p>	<p>The mariner's compass. (1302).</p> <p><b>Marco Polo</b> (d. 1323)</p>	<p><i>The Divine Comedy of Dante</i> (1330).</p> <p><b>Dante</b> (d. 1321)</p> <p><b>Petrarch</b> is crowned at the Capitol (1341).</p>	<p>The Popes at Avignon (1309-78).</p> <p>Accession of the Valois (1327).</p> <p>Beginning of the Hundred Years' War (1337).</p> <p>Cressy (1346).</p>
<p>Translation of <i>Titel</i>, by <b>Bertheure</b> (1362).</p> <p>Translation of <i>Aristotle</i>, by <b>Oresme</b> (1370-77).</p>		<p>The Bastille (1370).</p>	<p><b>Boccaccio</b> : the <i>Décaméron</i> (1354).</p> <p><b>Petrarch</b> (d. 1374).</p> <p><b>Boccaccio</b> (d. 1375).</p> <p>Translation of the Bible into English by <b>Wicliff</b> (1380).</p> <p><i>Canterbury Tales</i> of <b>Chaucer</b> (1390?).</p>	<p>Poitiers (1356).</p> <p>Etiénne Marcel (d. 1358).</p> <p>Charles V (1364-1380).</p> <p>Duguesclin.</p>
	<p><i>Imitation de Jésus-Christ</i> (1420?).</p> <p><b>Gerson</b> (d. 1429).</p>	<p>The Discovery of printing (1436).</p>		<p>Agin-court (1415).</p> <p>Treaty of Troyes (1420).</p> <p>Charles VII (1422).</p> <p>Siege of Orléans (1428).</p> <p>Death of Joan of Arc (1431).</p>
		<p>The Bible, printed by <b>Gutenberg</b> (1455).</p> <p>The first printing-house in Paris (1470).</p> <p><i>The Discovery of America</i> (1492).</p>		<p>Taking of Constantinople by Mahomet II (1453).</p> <p>End of the Hundred Years' War (1453).</p> <p>Charles the Bold (d. 1471).</p> <p>Louis XI (d. 1483).</p> <p>Charles VIII in Italy (1494).</p> <p>Louis XII (1498).</p>

Dates.	Lyrical and didactical Poetry.	Dramatic Poetry.	Theology Philosophy and Morals.	Political Eloquence and Pamphlets.	Historical
1500	Clément Marot : <i>Temple de Cupido</i> (1515).	Until 1548 : <i>Mystères</i> . — Until about 1520 : <i>Soties</i> . — During the whole century : <i>Farces et Moralités</i> <b>Gringoire</b> : <i>Sgtie du Prince des Sots</i> (1512).			Commis- (d. 151
	Jean Marot (d. 1523).				Le Loy Serviteur
1525	Jean Lemaire (d. 1525).				
	Clément Marot : <i>Adolescence Clémentine</i> (1532).				
	Clément Marot : <i>Psaumes</i> (1539).	<b>Buchanan</b> : <i>Jephthé</i> , latin tragedy (1540).	<b>Calvin</b> : <i>Institution chrétienne</i> , in Latin (1536).		
	<b>Cl. Marot</b> (d. 1544).				
	<b>Maurice Scève</b> : <i>Délie</i> (1544). <b>Marguerite de Navarre</b> : <i>Poésies</i> (1547).	Parlement forbids the <i>Mystères</i> (1548).	<b>Calvin</b> : <i>Institution chrétienne</i> , in French (1541).	<b>La Boétie</b> : <i>Servitude volontaire</i> (1548).	
1550	<b>Ronsard</b> : <i>Odes</i> (1550).	<b>Th. de Bèze</b> : <i>Abraham</i> (1551).			
	<b>J. du Bellay</b> : <i>L'Olive</i> (1550).	<b>Jodelle</b> : <i>Cléopâtre</i> (1552).			
		<b>Jodelle</b> : <i>Eugène</i> (1552).			

Novels and Tales.	Translations, Criticism and Erudition.	Sciences and Arts.	Foreign Literatures.	Historical Synchronisms
<p><b>Lemaire</b> : <i>Illustrations des</i> <i>Contes</i> (1509-1513).</p>	<p><b>Le Fèvre d'Étaples</b> : <i>Évangiles</i> (1524).</p>	<p><b>Copernic</b> discovers the system of the Earth (1507).</p> <p><b>Magellan</b> and the first travel around the world (1519).</p> <p><b>Léonard de Vinci</b> (d. 1519).</p> <p><b>Raphaël</b> (d. 1520).</p>	<p><b>Sannazar</b> : <i>Arcadia</i> (1502).</p> <p><b>Érasme</b> : <i>Éloge de la Folie</i> (1509).</p> <p><b>Ariosto</b> : <i>Orlando furioso</i> (1515).</p> <p><b>Machiavelli</b> : <i>Il Principe</i> (1518).</p>	<p><b>Julius II</b> Pope (1503-13).</p> <p><b>League of Cambrai</b> (1508).</p> <p><b>Henry VIII</b> of England (1509).</p> <p><b>Léon X</b> pope (1513-21).</p> <p><b>François I</b> (1515-47). <b>Marignan</b> (1515).</p> <p><b>Luther</b> excommunicated (1520).</p> <p><b>Charles V.</b> emperor (1519).</p> <p><b>Luther at Worms</b> (1521).</p>
<p><b>Belais</b> : <i>Chronique gargantua- ine</i> (1532).</p> <p><b>Belais</b> : <i>Pantagruel</i> (1533).</p> <p><b>Belais</b> : <i>Gargantua</i> (1535).</p> <p><b>Des Essarts</b> : <i>Amadis</i> (1540).</p> <p><b>Belais</b> <i>Le Tiers livre</i> (1546).</p>	<p><b>Cl. de Seyssel</b> : <i>Thucydide</i> (1527).</p> <p><b>Lazare de Baïf</b> : <i>Electre</i> (1537).</p> <p><b>H. Salel</b> : <i>Homère</i> (1545).</p> <p><b>J. du Bellay</b> : <i>Dé- fense et Illustra- tion</i> (1549).</p>	<p><b>Le Primatice</b> (Château de Cham- bord) (1526)</p> <p><b>Michel Ange</b> : <i>Le jugement dernier</i> (1533).</p> <p><b>Benvenuto Cel- lini</b> in Paris (1541).</p> <p><b>Pierre Lescot</b> (Le Louvre (1541).</p> <p><b>Copernic.</b></p>	<p><b>Machiavelli</b> (d. 1527).</p> <p><b>Ariosto</b> (d. 1533).</p> <p>Translation of the Bible in German by <b>Luther</b> (1534).</p>	<p>Pavia (1525).</p> <p>Conquest of Naples by the French (1528).</p> <p>Confession of Augsburg (1530).</p> <p>Rupture between Henry VIII and the Pope (1531).</p> <p>Cérises (1544).</p> <p>Opening of the Council of Trent (1545).</p> <p><b>Luther</b> (d. 1546).</p> <p><b>Henry II</b> (1547-59).</p>
<p><b>Belais</b> : <i>Le quart livre</i> (1552).</p>	<p><b>La Boétie</b> : <i>Éco- nomiques</i> of Xé- nophon (1550).</p>	<p><b>A. Paré</b> named King's surgeon (1552).</p>		<p><b>Mary</b> (1553-58).</p>

Dates.	Lyrical and didactical Poetry.	Dramatic Poetry.	Theology Philosophy and Morals.	Political Eloquence and Pamphlets.	Histo
1550	<b>Ronsard</b> : <i>Hymnes</i> (1555). <b>Ronsard</b> : <i>Amours d'Hélène</i> (1555). <b>J. du Bellay</b> : <i>Regrets</i> (1558). <b>J. du Bellay</b> (d. 1560) <b>Ronsard</b> : <i>Discours</i> (1560-64). <b>Ronsard</b> : <i>Franciade</i> (1572). <b>R. Belleau</b> : <i>Bergeries</i> (1572).	<b>M. de St-Gelais</b> : <i>Sophonisbe</i> (1554). <b>Grévin</b> : <i>Mort de César</i> (1560) <b>Baïf</b> : <i>Antigone</i> (1565). Tragedies of <b>Garnier</b> (1568-1580)	<b>Calvin</b> (d. 1564).	<b>L'Hospital</b> : <i>Harangues et Mercuriales</i> (1560-70). <b>Ét. Pasquier</b> : <i>Plaidoyer pour l'Université</i> (1565). <b>H. Estienne</b> : <i>Apolo- gie pour Hérodote</i> (1566).	<b>Ét. Pasquier</b> : <i>Recherches de France</i> (1568).
1575	<b>A. d'Aubigné</b> begins <i>les Tragiques</i> (1577). <b>Du Bartas</b> : <i>La Semaine</i> (1578);  <b>Ronsard</b> (d. 1585).  <b>Malherbe</b> : <i>Les Larmes de saint Pierre</i> (1587). <b>A. de Baïf</b> (d. 1590). <b>Du Bartas</b> (d. 1590).	Comedies of <b>Larivey</b> (1579-1600).  <b>Turnèbe</b> : <i>Les Contents</i> (1584).  Tragedies of <b>Montchrestien</b> (1596-1605).	<b>Montaigne</b> : <i>Essais</i> , Books I and II (1580). <b>Montaigne</b> : <i>Essais</i> , Book III (1588).  <b>Montaigne</b> (d. 1592).  <b>Montaigne</b> : Edition by M <sup>lle</sup> de Gournay (1595).	<b>Bodin</b> : <i>De la République</i> (1576).  <b>G. du Vair</b> : <i>Discours et Œuvres morales</i> (1596-1600).  <b>Du Perron</b> : <i>Or. fun. de Ronsard</i> (1585).  <i>Satyre Ménippée</i> (1594).	<b>Montluc</b> : <i>mentaire</i> (ed. 1597).  <b>Brantôme</b> : <i>des grands capitaines</i> (1665).  <b>La Noue</b> : <i>cours</i>
1600					



Novels and Tales	Translations, Criticism and Erudition	Sciences and Arts.	Foreign Literatures.	Historical Synchronisms
<p>Rabelais (d. 1553). le Navarre : améron (1558).</p> <p>Adventure spériers: Jo- ux devis (1558).</p> <p>elais : V<sup>e</sup> li- vre (1562).</p>	<p>R. Belleau : Anacréon (1557).</p> <p>Amyot : <i>Vies</i> by Plutarch (1559).</p> <p>Scaliger : <i>Poéti- que</i> (1561).</p> <p>Amyot : <i>Œuvres morales</i> of Plu- tarch (1570).</p> <p>H. Estienne : <i>The- saurus linguae graecae</i> (1572).</p>	<p>B. Palissy : The enamel (1555).</p> <p>Ph. Delorme (Les Tuileries) (1563).</p> <p>Michel-Ange (d. 1564).</p> <p>Jean Goujon (Le Louvre) (1570).</p>	<p>Tasso : <i>Aminta</i> (1571) Camoens : <i>Lusia- des</i> (1572).</p>	<p>Elisabeth queen of England (1558).</p> <p>Charles IX (1559-74)</p> <p>Conjuration of Amboise (1560). End of the Council of Trente (1563).</p> <p>Massacre of St Bartholomew (1572). Henry III (1574).</p>
	<p>H. Estienne : <i>La Précurrence du langage français</i> (1579).</p> <p>Cl. Fauchet : <i>An- tiquités</i> (1579). Amyot (d. 1593).</p>	<p>Le Pont-Neuf (1578).</p> <p>B. Palissy : <i>Dis- cours admirables</i> (1580)</p> <p>The Gregorian Calendar (1582).</p>	<p>Tasso : <i>Jérusalem delivered</i> (1575).</p> <p>Camoens (d. 1579).</p> <p>Lyly : <i>Euphuës</i> (1580).</p> <p>Tasso (d. 1595)</p> <p>Shakespeare: <i>Ro- méo et Juliette</i> (1595).</p>	<p>States of Blois (1576).</p> <p>Execution of Mary Stuart (1587).</p> <p>Murder of Henry III (1589)</p> <p>Henry IV (1589-1610).</p> <p>Entry of Henry IV into Paris (1594).</p> <p>Edict of Nantes (1598).</p>

Dates.	Theatre	Diverse genres of poetry.	Criticism.	History Memoirs and Epistles.	Theology Philosophy and Morals.
1601	<p><b>Montchrestien</b> : <i>Aman</i> (1601).</p> <p><b>A Hardy</b> : <i>Didon</i> (1603).</p> <p><b>Montchrestien</b> : <i>L'Ecoissaise</i> (1605).</p> <p><b>A Hardy</b> : <i>Ariane</i> (1606).</p> <p><b>J. de Schelandre</b> : <i>Tyr et Sidon</i> (1608).</p>	<p><b>Desportes</b> : <i>Psaumes</i> (1603).</p> <p><b>Malherbe</b> : <i>Prière pour le roi allant en Limousin</i> (1605).</p> <p><b>Malherbe</b> : <i>Ode à Marie de Médicis</i> (1610).</p> <p><b>D'Aubigné</b> : <i>Les Tragiques</i> (1616).</p> <p><b>Racan</b> : <i>Bergeries</i> (1618).</p>	<p><b>Vauquelin de La Fresnaye</b> : <i>Art Poétique</i> (1605).</p> <p>Opening of the <i>Hôtel de Rambouillet</i> (1615).</p>	<p><b>De Thou</b> : <i>Historia mei temporis</i> (1604).</p> <p>Foundation of the <i>Mercure Français</i> (1605).</p> <p><b>Et. Pasquier</b> <i>Recherches de la France</i> (Book VII) (1611).</p> <p><b>D'Aubigné</b> : <i>Histoire Universelle</i> (1616-1620).</p> <p><b>Balzac</b> : <i>Letters</i> (1624).</p>	<p><b>Charron</b> : <i>Sagesse</i> (1604).</p> <p>Reform of the Royal bégelique nauld (1605).</p> <p><b>Saint Fr</b> : <i>de Sale</i> (1605).</p> <p><b>Saint Fr</b> : <i>de Sal</i> (1611).</p> <p>Foundat the <i>Orat</i> (1611).</p> <p><b>Bérulle</b> : <i>Traité de l'Orat</i> (1611).</p>
1625	<p><b>Mairet</b> : <i>Silvanire</i> (1625).</p> <p><b>Corneille</b> : <i>Mélite</i> (1629).</p> <p><b>Corneille</b> : <i>Clitandre</i> (1632).</p> <p><b>Rotrou</b> : <i>Hercule mourant</i> (1632).</p> <p><b>Mairet</b> : <i>Sophonisbe</i> (1634).</p> <p><b>Corneille</b> : <i>La Placette Royale. Les Tuileries. Médée</i> (1635).</p> <p><b>Tristan</b> : <i>Marianne</i> (1636).</p> <p><b>Corneille</b> : <i>L'Illusion Comique Le Cid</i> (1636).</p> <p><b>Desmarets</b> : <i>Les Visionnaires</i> (1637).</p> <p><b>Scudéry</b> : <i>L'Amour tyrannique</i> (1638).</p> <p><b>Corneille</b> : <i>Horace. Cinna</i> (1640).</p> <p><b>Corneille</b> : <i>Polyeucte</i> (1643).</p>	<p><b>Théophile de Viau</b> (1626).</p> <p><b>Malherbe</b> : <i>Ode à Louis XIII</i> (1627).</p> <p><b>Malherbe</b> (d. 1628).</p> <p><i>La Guirlande de Julie</i> (1641).</p>	<p><b>F. Ogier</b> : <i>Preface of Tyr et Sidon</i> (1628).</p> <p>Letters Patent of the French <i>Academy</i> (1635).</p> <p><i>Sentiments de l'Académie sur le Cid</i> (1637).</p>	<p>Foundation of the <i>Gazette de France</i> (1631).</p> <p><b>Balzac</b> : <i>Le Prince</i> (1631).</p> <p><b>M<sup>me</sup> de Motteville</b> : <i>auprès d'Anne d'Autriche</i> (1643-1666).</p> <p>(<i>Memoires</i> published in 1723).</p>	<p>Foundat Port-R Paris (1633).</p> <p><b>Saint-Cy</b> : <i>Port-R</i> (1633-1634).</p> <p><b>Descartes</b> : <i>cours de methode</i> (1637).</p> <p>Publicatio <i>Augustin Jansé</i> (1644).</p> <p><b>Arnauld</b> : <i>Fréquent munition</i> (1644).</p>

Sacred and profane. Eloquence	Novels.	Sciences and Arts.	Foreign Literatures	Historical Synchronisms.
<p>nt François Sales prea- es in Paris (1602).</p>	<p>H. d'Urfé : <i>L'Astrée</i> (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> parts) (1610).</p> <p>H. d'Urfé : <i>L'Astrée</i> (3<sup>rd</sup> part) (1619).</p> <p>Sorel : <i>Francion</i> (1622).</p>	<p>The telescope of Galileo (1609).</p> <p>Versailles, first château (1624).</p>	<p>Shakespeare : <i>Julius Cæsar</i> (1601).</p> <p>Shakespeare : <i>Hamlet</i> (1602).</p> <p>Cervantès : 1<sup>st</sup> part of <i>Don Quichotte</i> (1605).</p> <p>Cervantès : <i>Nouvelles</i> (1612).</p> <p>Cervantès : 2<sup>nd</sup> part of <i>Don Quichotte</i> (1615).</p> <p>d. Cervantès. d. Shakespeare (1616).</p> <p>Bacon : <i>Novum Organum</i> (1620).</p>	<p>Henry IV (d. 1610).</p> <p>Louis XIII (1610-43).</p> <p>Estates General (1614).</p> <p>Richelieu Prime Minister (1616-1642).</p> <p>Concini (d. 1617).</p> <p>Beginning of the Thirty years War (1618).</p>
<p>toine Le- aitre, lawyer ins Port-Royal (1637).</p>	<p>4<sup>th</sup> part of the <i>Astrée</i> published by Baro (1627).</p> <p>Sorel : <i>Le Berger extravagant</i> (1628).</p> <p>Gomberville : <i>Potterandre</i> (1632).</p> <p>M<sup>lle</sup> de Scudéry : <i>Ibrahim</i> (1641).</p> <p>La Calprenède : <i>Cassandre</i> (1642).</p>	<p>Harvey : <i>Circulation du sang</i> (1628).</p> <p>Képler (d. 1631).</p> <p>Galileo : <i>Système du monde</i> (1632).</p> <p>Pascal : <i>Traité des Sections coniques</i> (1640).</p> <p>Rubens (d. 1640).</p> <p>Van Dyck (d. 1641).</p> <p>Galileo (d. 1642).</p>	<p>Bacon (d. 1620).</p> <p>Lope de Vega (d. 1635).</p>	<p>Execution of Montmorency (1627).</p> <p>Taking of La Rochelle (1628).</p> <p><i>Journée des Dupes</i> (1630).</p> <p>Battle of Leipsig (1631).</p> <p>Gustavus-Adolphus (d. 1632).</p> <p>Birth of Louis XIV (1638).</p> <p>English first Civil War. Cromwell (1641).</p>





Sacred and profane Eloquence.	Novels	Sciences and Arts.	Foreign Literatures.	Historical Synchronisms.
		Experiences of <b>Toricelli</b> on the barometer (1643).		<b>Richelieu</b> (d. 1642).
	<b>M<sup>lle</sup> de Scudéry</b> : <i>Cyrus</i> (1643).			<b>Louis XIII</b> (d. 1643).
	<b>La Calprenède</b> : <i>Cléopâtre</i> (1647).			<b>Rocroy</b> (1643).
				Regence of <b>Anne d'Autriche</b> ; <b>Mazarin</b> (1643-1660).
				<i>Treaties of Westphalie</i> (1648).
				<b>The « Fronde »</b> (1648-52).
				<b>Charles I</b> (d. 1649).
<b>Bossuet</b> : archdeacon at Metz (1652-59).	<b>Scarron</b> : <i>Roman comique</i> (1651).	<b>Lesueur</b> (d. 1655).		
<b>Bossuet</b> : <i>Sermon sur la Loi de Dieu</i> (1653).	<b>Cyrano</b> : <i>Voyage dans la Lune</i> (1655).			<i>Peace of the Pyrenees</i> (1659).
<b>Bossuet</b> : <i>Panegyrique de St-Bernard</i> (1655).	<b>M<sup>lle</sup> de Scudéry</b> : <i>Clélie</i> ( <i>Carte du T. ndre</i> ) (1656).	Astronomical discoveries of <b>Huyghens</b> (1656-59).		
<b>Bossuet</b> : 1 <sup>st</sup> <i>Sermon sur la Providence</i> (1656).				<b>Louis XIV</b> marries <b>Maria-Theresa</b> (1660).
<b>Bossuet</b> : <i>Panegyrique de St-Paul</i> (1657).				
<b>Bossuet</b> : <i>Carême des Minimes de la Place-Royale</i> (1660).				

Dates.	Theatre.	Diverse genres of Poetry.	Criticism.	History, Memoirs, and Epistles.	Theology, Philosophy, and Morals.
1661	<b>Molière</b> : <i>École des Maris</i> (1662).	<b>La Fontaine</b> : <i>Élégie aux Nymphes de Vaux</i> (1661).		<b>La Rochefoucauld</b> writes his <i>Mémoires</i> (about 1662).	
	<b>Molière</b> : <i>École des Femmes</i> (1662).				<b>Pascal</b> : (d
	<b>Corneille</b> : <i>Sertorius</i> (1662).				
	<b>Quinault</b> : <i>Astarté</i> (1663).	<b>Boileau</b> : <i>Sat. VII</i> (1663).			
		<b>Racine</b> : <i>Ode sur la convalescence du Roi</i> (1663).			
	<b>Racine</b> : <i>Thébaïde</i> (1664).	<b>Racine</b> : <i>La Renommée aux Muses</i> (1663).		<b>Saint-Évremond</b> : <i>Génie du peuple romain</i> (1664).	
	<b>Molière</b> : <i>Tartuffe</i> (3 acts) (1664).		<b>Boileau</b> : <i>Dialogues sur les héros de romans</i> (1664).		
	<b>Molière</b> : <i>Don Juan</i> (1665).	<b>Boileau</b> : <i>Sat. II</i> (1664).		<b>Fléchier</b> : <i>Les Grands Jours d'Auvergne</i> (1665).	<b>La Rochefoucauld</b> : <i>mes</i> (1665)
	<b>Racine</b> : <i>Alexandre</i> (1665).	<b>Boileau</b> : <i>Sat. IV</i> (1664).	<b>Foundation of the Journal des Savants (1665).</b>		<b>Racine</b> : <i>la Pauter Hérésies</i>
	<b>Molière</b> : <i>Misanthrope</i> (1666).	<b>Boileau</b> : <i>Sat. III and V</i> (1665).			
	<b>Corneille</b> : <i>Agésilas</i> (1666).	<b>La Fontaine</b> : <i>Contes</i> (1665).			
		<b>Boileau</b> : <i>1<sup>re</sup> édité. of the Satires I-VII</i> (1666).			
	<b>Racine</b> : <i>Andromaque</i> (1667).				
	<b>Racine</b> : <i>Les Plaideurs</i> (1668).	<b>Boileau</b> : <i>Sat. VIII and IX</i> (1667).			
	<b>Molière</b> : <i>L'Avare</i> (1668).	<b>La Fontaine</b> : <i>Fables I to IV</i> (1668).			
	<b>Racine</b> : <i>Britannicus</i> (1669).	<b>Boileau</b> : <i>Ép. I and II</i> (1669).			
	<b>Molière</b> : <i>Tartuffe</i> (1669).	<b>Boursault</b> : <i>Sat. des Satires</i> (1669).			
1670	<b>Corneille</b> : <i>Tite et Bérénice</i> (1670).			<b>M<sup>me</sup> de Sévigné</b> begins her Correspondence with <b>M<sup>me</sup> de Grignan</b> (1671).	<b>Pascal</b> : <i>Port-Royal post.</i> (1671)
				<b>Retz</b> writes his <i>Mémoires</i> (about 1672).	<b>Nicole</b> : <i>de morale</i>
	<b>Racine</b> : <i>Bérénice</i> (1670).	<b>Boileau</b> : <i>Ep. III and IV</i> (1672).			
	<b>Molière</b> : <i>Bourgeois gentilhomme</i> (1670).	<b>La Fontaine</b> : <i>Captivité de Saint-Male</i> (1673).			
	<b>Molière</b> : <i>Femmes savantes</i> (1672).				<b>Bossuet</b> : <i>position foi cat.</i> (1671).
	<b>Racine</b> : <i>Bajazet</i> (1672).		<b>Ménage</b> : <i>Observations sur la langue française</i> (1672).		
	<b>Th. Corneille</b> : <i>Ariane</i> (1672).				

Sacred and profane Eloquence.	Novels.	Sciences and Arts.	Foreign Literatures.	Historical Synchronisms.
ossuet : <i>Carême des Carmélites</i> (1661).		Colbert founds the Academy of Ins- criptions (1663).		Colbert clerk (1661)
ossuet : <i>Carême du Louvre</i> (1662).				
ossuet : <i>Avent du Louvre</i> (1665).				Law-suit of Fouquet (1664).
ossuet : <i>Carême de Saint-Thomas du Louvre</i> (1665).	Furetière : <i>Ro- man bourgeois</i> (1666).	Colbert founds the Academy of Pain- ting (1664).		
		Newton : <i>Traité des fluxions</i> (1665).		
		Poussin (d. 1665).		
ascaron : <i>Orais. funèbre d'Anne d'Autriche</i> (1666).		Foundation of the Academy of Scien- ces (1666).		
		The Gobelins (1667).		
ossuet : <i>Carême de Saint-Germain</i> (1666).		The Observatory (1667).	Milton : <i>Paradise Lost</i> (1667).	
ossuet : <i>Avent de Saint-Germain</i> (1669).			Dryden : <i>An Es- say of Dramatic Poesy</i> (1668).	Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1668).
ossuet : <i>Or. fu- nèbre d'Henriette de France</i> (1669).		Mignard (d. 1668). Foundation of the Academy of Mu- sic ( <i>Opéra</i> ) (1669).		
		Rembrandt (d. 1669).		
ossuet : <i>Or. fu- nèbre d'Henriette d'Angleterre</i> (1670).	M <sup>re</sup> de La Fa- yette : <i>Zayde</i> (1670).	The colonnade of the Louvre, by Cl. Perrault (1670).	Spinoza : <i>Théolo- gie politique</i> (1670).	Treaty of Dover (1670).
Bourdaloze : 1 <sup>re</sup> <i>Carême à la cour</i> (1670).				War with Holland (1672).
		Philippe de Champaigne (d. 1674).		Turenne (d. 1675).

Dates.	Theatre.	Diverse genres of Poetry.	Criticism.	History Memoirs Epistles.	Theolog Philosoph and Moral.
	<p><b>Racine</b> : <i>Mithridate</i> (1673).</p> <p><b>Molière</b> : <i>Malade imaginaire</i> (1673).</p> <p><b>Molière</b> (d. 1673).</p> <p><b>Cornéille</b> : <i>Suréna</i> (1674).</p> <p><b>Racine</b> : <i>Iphigénie</i> (1674).</p> <p><b>Racine</b> : <i>Phèdre</i> (1677).</p> <p><b>Th. Corneille</b> : <i>C<sup>te</sup> d'Essex</i> (1678).</p>	<p><b>Boileau</b> : <i>Ép.</i> V, VIII, IX (1674).</p> <p><b>Boileau</b> : <i>Lutrin</i>, I-IV (1674).</p> <p><b>Boileau</b> : <i>Art poétique</i> (1674).</p> <p><b>Boileau</b> : <i>Ép.</i> VI and VII (1677).</p> <p><b>La Fontaine</b> : <i>Fables</i> VII-XI (1679).</p>	<p><b>Boileau</b> : <i>Traité du Sublime</i>, of Longin (1674).</p>	<p><b>Boileau and Racine</b> named historiographers of the King (1677).</p>	<p><b>Malebranche</b> : <i>Recherche de vérité</i> (1675).</p>
1680.	<p><b>Boursault</b> : <i>Mer-cure galant</i> (1683).</p> <p><b>Corneille</b> (d. 1684).</p> <p><b>Campistron</b> : <i>Andronic</i> (1685).</p> <p><b>Quinault</b> : <i>Armide</i> (1686).</p> <p><b>Racine</b> : <i>Esther</i> (1689).</p> <p><b>Boursault</b> : <i>Ésope à la ville</i> (1689).</p> <p><b>Racine</b> : <i>Athalie</i> (1691).</p> <p><b>Campistron</b> : <i>Tiridate</i> (1691).</p> <p><b>Regnard</b> : <i>Le Joueur</i> (1696).</p> <p><b>La Fosse</b> : <i>Manlius</i> (1698).</p> <p><b>Racine</b> (d. 1699).</p> <p><b>Regnard</b> : <i>Le Retour imprévu</i> (1700).</p>	<p><b>La Fontaine</b> : <i>Le Quinquina</i> (1682).</p> <p><b>Boileau</b> : <i>Lutrin</i>, V, VI (1683).</p> <p><b>Boileau</b> : <i>Ode sur la prise de Namur</i> (1692).</p> <p><b>Boileau</b> : <i>Sat.</i> X (1693).</p> <p><b>Boileau</b> : <i>Ép.</i> X, XI, XII (1695).</p> <p><b>La Fontaine</b> : <i>Fables</i> (I, XII) (1694).</p> <p><b>La Fontaine</b> : (d. 1695).</p> <p><b>Boileau</b> : <i>Sat.</i> XI (1698).</p>	<p><b>Fénelon</b> : <i>Dialogues sur l'éloquence</i> (about 1680).</p> <p><b>Bayle</b> : <i>Nouvelles de la république des lettres</i> (1684.87).</p> <p><b>Perrault</b> : <i>Siècle de Louis le Grand</i> (1687).</p> <p><b>Perrault</b> : Beginning of the quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns. (1687).</p> <p><b>Furetière</b> : <i>Dictionnaire</i> (1690).</p> <p><b>Perrault</b> : <i>Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes</i> (1688-1697).</p> <p><b>La Bruyère</b> : <i>Disc. à l'Académie française</i> (1693).</p> <p><b>Boileau</b> : <i>Réflexions sur Longin</i> (1694).</p> <p>First edit. of the <i>Dictionnaire de l'Acad. française</i> (1694).</p> <p><b>Bayle</b> : <i>Dictionnaire critique</i> (1695-1697).</p> <p><b>M<sup>me</sup> Dacier</b> : <i>Homère</i> (1699).</p>	<p><b>Bossuet</b> : <i>Discours sur l'histoire universelle</i> (1681).</p> <p><b>Mézeray</b> (d. 1683).</p> <p><b>M<sup>me</sup> de La Fayette</b> : <i>Mémoires</i> (1688-1689).</p> <p><b>Bussy-Rabutin</b> (d. 1690).</p> <p><b>Fleury</b> : <i>Histoire ecclésiastique</i> (1691).</p> <p><b>Racine</b> : <i>Histoire de Port-Royal</i> (1694).</p> <p><b>M<sup>me</sup> de Sévigné</b> (d. 1696).</p>	<p><b>La Roche-cauld</b> (d. 1684).</p> <p><b>Malebranche</b> : <i>Morale</i> (1684).</p> <p><b>Fontenelle</b> : <i>Dialogue des morts</i> (1683).</p> <p><b>Fontenelle</b> : <i>Pluralité des mondes</i> (1686).</p> <p><b>Fénelon</b> : <i>Éducation des rois</i> (1687).</p> <p><b>Bossuet</b> : <i>Discours sur l'histoire universelle</i> (1681).</p> <p><b>La Bruyère</b> : <i>Caractères</i> (1688).</p> <p><b>R. Simon</b> : <i>Histoire critique du Nouveau Testament</i> (1692).</p> <p><b>Bossuet</b> : <i>Discours sur l'histoire universelle</i> (1681).</p> <p><b>A. Arnauld</b> (d. 1694).</p> <p><b>Nicolas</b> (d. 1694).</p> <p><b>La Bruyère</b> : <i>Caractères</i> (1688).</p> <p><b>Fénelon</b> : <i>Éducation des rois</i> (1687).</p> <p><b>Bossuet</b> : <i>Discours sur l'histoire universelle</i> (1681).</p>



Sacred and profane Eloquence.	Novels.	Sciences and Arts	Foreign Literatures.	Historical Synchronisms.
<b>Bascaron</b> : <i>Or. fun. de Turenne</i> (1675).				
<b>Bossuet</b> : <i>Sermon pour la profes- sion de M<sup>lle</sup> de la Vallière</i> (1675).			<b>Spinoza</b> : <i>Éthique</i> (1677).	<i>Treaty of Nimègue</i> (1678).
<b>Béchier</b> : <i>Or. fun. de Turenne</i> (1676).	<b>M<sup>me</sup> de La Fayette</b> : <i>La Prin- cesse de Clèves</i> (1678).	Posthumous publi- cation of the Works of <b>Fermat</b> (1679),		
<b>Batru</b> : <i>Plaidoyer</i> (1681).		<b>Claude Lorrain</b> (d. 1682).	<b>Calderon</b> (1681).	<b>Colbert</b> (d. 1683). <b>Maria-Theresa</b> (d. 1683).
<b>Bossuet</b> : <i>Sermon sur l'unité de l'Eglise</i> (1681). <b>ppointed Bishop of Meaux.</b>				<b>Louis XIV marries M<sup>me</sup> de Maintenon</b> (1684). <b>Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685). <b>Condé</b> (d. 1686).</b>
<b>Bossuet</b> : <i>Or. fun. de Marie-Thérèse</i> (1683).		<b>Lulli</b> : <i>Armide</i> (1686). <b>Lulli</b> (d. 1687).		
<b>Bossuet</b> : <i>Or. fun. d'Anne de Gon- zague</i> (1685).		<b>Achievement of the Château of Ver- sailles (1668).</b>		
<b>Bossuet</b> : <i>Or. fun. de Condé</i> (1687).			<b>Locke</b> : <i>An Essay on the Human Understanding.</i> (1690).	<b>Second Revolution of England (1688).</b>
<b>Fénelon</b> : <i>Sermon pour l'Épiphanie</i> (1685).		<b>Tournefort</b> : <i>Botanique</i> (1694).		
<b>Fénelon</b> : Archbis- hop of Cambrai (1695).	<b>Perrault</b> : <i>Contes</i> (1697).			<b>Louvois</b> (d. 1691). <b>Taking of Namur (1692). <b>Treaty of Ryswick (1697). <b>Philip V, king of Spain (1700).</b></b></b>
<b>Massillon</b> : <i>Avent à la cour</i> (1699).	<b>Fénelon</b> : <i>Télémaque</i> (1699).			

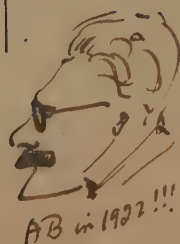
Dates.	Theatre.	Diverse genres of Poetry.	Theology, Philosophy, Politics and Morals.	History Memoirs, Epistles.	Criticisms
1701.	<b>Lagrange-Chancel</b> : <i>Amasis</i> (1701). <b>Boursault</b> : <i>Esopé à la Cour</i> (1701). <b>Dufresny</b> : <i>Le Double veuvage</i> (1702). <b>Regnard</b> : <i>Folies amoureuses</i> (1704).  <b>Crébillon</b> : <i>Atrée</i> (1707). <b>Regnard</b> : <i>Légataire universel</i> (1708). <b>Regnard</b> (d. 1709). <b>Le Sage</b> : <i>Turcaret</i> (1709).  <b>Crébillon</b> : <i>Rhadamiste</i> (1711).	<b>Boileau</b> : <i>Satire XII</i> (1705).  <b>Boileau</b> (d. 1711).	<b>Dufresny</b> : <i>Lettres siamoises</i> (1703). <b>Bossuet</b> : <i>Défense de la tradition</i> (1704).  <b>Vauban</b> : <i>La Dîme royale</i> (1707).  <b>Bossuet</b> : <i>Politique tirée de l'Ecr. Sainte</i> (1709) (posth).  <b>Abbé de Saint-Pierre</b> : <i>Projet de paix perpétuelle</i> (1713).  <b>Fénelon</b> : <i>Traité de l'existence de Dieu</i> (1712).	<b>Le P. Daniel</b> : <i>Hist. de France</i> (1713). <b>Hamilton</b> : <i>Le Chev. de Grammont</i> (1713). First letters of <b>V. I-taire</b> (1713).  <b>Saint-Simon</b> member of the Council. (1715).  <b>M<sup>re</sup> de Lambert</b> (1710-33).	<b>Lettre de leau à rault</b> (1701).  Correspondence of <b>Fénelon</b> <i>La Motte</i> (1710).  <b>Fénelon</b> : <i>L'Académie</i> (1714) (ed. 1714).  <b>M<sup>re</sup> Dacier</b> Préface à trad. de l'éc. sée.
1715.	<b>Crébillon</b> : <i>Sémiramis</i> (1717).  <b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Edipe</i> (1718).  <b>Marivaux</b> : <i>Arlequin poli par l'amour</i> (1720).  <b>Marivaux</b> : <i>La Surprise de l'amour</i> (1722). <b>La Motte</b> : <i>Inès de Castro</i> (1723).  <b>Destouches</b> : <i>Le Philosophe marié</i> (1726).  <b>Marivaux</b> : <i>Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard</i> (1730).	<b>L. Racine</b> : <i>La Grâce</i> (1720).  <b>Voltaire</b> : <i>La Henriade</i> (1723) (definit. edit. 1728).	<b>Fénelon</b> : <i>Dialogues des morts</i> (1718) (post.).  <b>Montesquieu</b> : <i>Lettres persanes</i> (1721). <b>Rollin</b> : <i>Traité des Etudes</i> (1726).  <b>Bossuet</b> : <i>Élévations sur les mystères</i> (1727) (posth).	Ed. of the <i>Mémoires</i> of <b>Retz</b> (1717).  <b>M<sup>re</sup> de Maintenon</b> (d. 1719).  <b>Vertot</b> : <i>Rév. romaines</i> (1719).  Retirement of <b>Saint-Simon</b> (1723). First edition of <b>M<sup>re</sup> de Sévigné</b> (1725-26).  <b>M<sup>re</sup> de Tencin</b> (1726-49). <b>M<sup>re</sup> de Caylus</b> (d. 1729). <b>De Brosses</b> : <i>Lettres sur l'Italie</i> (1729-40).	<b>Dubos</b> : <i>Réflexions sur la poésie et la peinture</i> (1719).  <b>Voltaire</b> : <i>L'Édipe</i> (1718).  <b>Marivaux</b> : <i>Spectateur pais</i> (1722-23).  <b>L'abbé F. vout</b> : <i>Le Coeur et le Cerveau</i> (1723-40).
1730.	<b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Brutus</i> (1730.)			<b>Rollin</b> : <i>Hist. ancienne</i> (1730-35).	<b>Desfontaines</b> : <i>Le Nouveau du Parnasse</i> (1730-32).

Sacred and profane Eloquence.	Novels.	Sciences and Arts.	Foreign Literatures.	Historical Synchronisms.
<b>Massillon</b> : <i>Carême à la Cour</i> (1704).				
<b>Bossuet</b> (d. 1704).	<b>Le Sage</b> : <i>Le Diable boiteux</i> (1707).		<b>Leibnitz</b> : <i>Théodicée</i> (1710).	<b>Charles XII</b> at Pul-tawa (1709).
<b>Bourdaloue</b> (d. 1704).			<b>Addison</b> : <i>Spectator</i> (1711).	Victory of <i>Villars</i> at Denain (1712).
<b>Fénelon</b> (d. 1715).				Treaty of <i>Utrecht</i> (1713).
<b>Massillon</b> : <i>Or. fun. de Louis XIV</i> (1715).	<b>Le Sage</b> : <i>Gil Blas</i> (1715) (vols. 1 and 2).		<b>Addison</b> : <i>Cato</i> (1713).	Treaty of <i>Rastadt</i> (1714).
<b>Massillon</b> : <i>Petit Carême</i> (1718).			<b>Leibnitz</b> (d. 1716).	<b>Law's</b> System (1716-20).
<b>Fénelon</b> : <i>Dialogues sur l'éloquence</i> (1718) (posth).	<b>Montesquieu</b> : <i>Temple de Gnide</i> (1724).	<b>Watteau</b> (d. 1721).	<b>D. de Foë</b> : <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> (1719).	Conspiracy of <i>Cellamare</i> (1718).
	<b>Le Sage</b> : <i>Gil Blas</i> (1724) (vols. 3).	<b>Newton</b> (d. 1727).	<b>Addison</b> (d. 1719).	<b>Dubois</b> , Prime Minister (1722-26).
			<b>Leibnitz</b> : <i>La Monadologie</i> (1720) (posth).	
			<b>Swift</b> : <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> (1726).	<b>Louis XV</b> marries <i>Maria Leczinska</i> (1725).
			<b>Pope</b> : <i>Dunciad</i> (1728).	<b>Fleury</b> , Prime Minister (1726-43).
	<b>Marivaux</b> : <i>Marianne</i> (1731-41).		<b>D. de Foë</b> (d. 1731).	

Dates.	Theatre.	Diverse genres of Poetry.	Theology, Philosophy, Politics and Morals.	History, Memoirs, Epistles, Salons.	Criticism.
	<p><b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Zaïre</i> (1732).</p> <p><b>Destouches</b> : <i>Le Glorieux</i> (1732).</p> <p><b>Marivaux</b> : <i>Les Fausses Confidences</i> (1733).</p> <p><b>La Chaussée</b> : <i>Le Préjugé à la mode</i> (1735).</p> <p><b>Voltaire</b> : <i>La Mort de César</i> (1735).</p> <p><b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Alzire</i> (1736).</p> <p><b>Voltaire</b> : <i>L'Enfant prodigue</i> (1736).</p> <p><b>Marivaux</b> : <i>Le Legs</i> (1736).</p> <p><b>Piron</b> : <i>La Métromanie</i> (1738).</p>	<p><b>Gresset</b> : <i>Vert-Vert</i> (1734).</p> <p><b>Gresset</b> : <i>La Char treuse</i> (1735).</p> <p><b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Le Mondain</i> (1736).</p> <p><b>Voltaire</b> : <i>La Défense du Mondain</i> (1737).</p> <p><b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Discours sur l'homme</i> (1738-40).</p>	<p><b>Bossuet</b> : <i>Méd. sur l'Evangile. — Traité de la concupiscence</i> (1731) (posth.).</p> <p><b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Lettres anglaises</i> (1734).</p>	<p><b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Charles XII</i> (1731).</p> <p><b>Montesquieu</b> : <i>Grandeur et décadence des Romains</i> (1734).</p> <p><b>M<sup>me</sup> de Sévigné</b> : <i>Knight de Perrin's ed.</i> (1734-36).</p> <p><b>Voltaire</b> : <i>First letters to Frederick II</i> (1736).</p>	<p><b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Face to Bru</i> (1730).</p> <p><b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Tple du goût</i> (1733).</p> <p><b>Desfontaine</b> : <i>Observati sur les Ec modernes</i> (1735-43).</p>
1740.	<p><b>Marivaux</b> : <i>L'Épreuve</i> (1740).</p> <p><b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Mahomet</i> (1741).</p> <p><b>La Chaussée</b> : <i>Mélanide</i> (1741).</p> <p><b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Mérope</i> (1743).</p> <p><b>La Chaussée</b> : <i>L'Ecole des Mères</i> (1744).</p> <p><b>Gresset</b> : <i>Le Méchant</i> (1747).</p> <p><b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Sémiramis</i> (1748).</p> <p><b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Nanine</i> (1749).</p> <p><b>Crébillon</b> : <i>Catiline</i> (1748).</p>	<p><b>J.-B. Rousseau</b> (1741).</p> <p><b>L. Racine</b> : <i>La Religion</i> (1742).</p> <p><b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Poème de Fontenoy</i> (1745).</p>	<p><b>Montesquieu</b> : <i>Dialogue de Sylla et d'Eucrate</i> (1745).</p> <p><b>Diderot</b> : <i>Essai sur le mérite et la vertu</i> (1745).</p> <p><b>Diderot</b> : <i>Pensées philosophiques</i> (1746).</p> <p><b>Vauvenargues</b> : <i>Réflexions et Maximes</i> (1746).</p> <p><b>Vauvenargues</b> : (d. 1747).</p> <p><b>La Mettrie</b> : <i>L'homme machine</i> (1748).</p> <p><b>Montesquieu</b> : <i>Esprit des Lois</i> (1748).</p> <p><b>Diderot</b> : <i>Lettres sur les Aveugles</i> (1749).</p> <p><b>Buffon</b> : <i>Histoire naturelle, t. I</i> (1749).</p> <p><b>Rousseau</b> : <i>Discours sur les sciences et les arts</i> (1750).</p>	<p><b>Saint-Simon</b> writes his <i>Mémoires</i> from 1740.</p> <p><b>M<sup>me</sup> du Deffand</b> (1740-80).</p> <p><b>Rollin</b> (d. 1741).</p> <p><b>Hénault</b> : <i>Abregé chronologique</i> (1744).</p> <p><b>M<sup>me</sup> Geoffrin</b> (1749-77).</p>	<p><b>L'abbé blanc</b> : <i>Lettres d'un Franciscain</i> (1740).</p> <p><b>Fréron</b> : <i>Lettres de M<sup>me</sup> la Comtesse de ...</i> (1745-46).</p> <p><b>Clément</b> : <i>Nouvelles littéraires</i> (Les années littéraires 1748-52).</p> <p><b>Fréron</b> : <i>Lettres sur quel écrits de ...</i> (1749).</p>
1750.					



Sacred and profane Eloquence.	Novels.	Sciences and Arts.	Foreign Literatures.	Historical Synchronisms.
Massillon (d. 1742).	<p><b>Le Sage</b> : <i>Don Guzman</i> (1731).</p> <p><b>L'abbé Prévost</b> : <i>Manon Lescaut</i> (1732).</p> <p><b>Le Sage</b> : <i>Gil Blas</i> (1735) (vols. 4).</p> <p><b>Marivaux</b> : <i>Le Paysan parvenu</i> (1735-36).</p> <p><b>L'abbé Prévost</b> : <i>Le Doyen de Kilnerine</i> (1735).</p>	<p><b>Réaumur</b> (thermo- meter) (1731).</p> <p><b>Linné</b> : <i>Systema naturae</i> (1735).</p>	<p><b>Pope</b> : <i>Essay on Man</i> (1732).</p>	<p>War of the Polish Succession (1733).</p>
	<p>Translation of <b>Richardson's, Pamela</b> by <b>abbé Prévost</b> (1742)</p> <p><b>Le Sage</b> (d. 1747).</p> <p><b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Zadig</i> (1747).</p> <p><b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Memnon</i> (1750).</p>	<p><b>Cassini</b> : <i>Éléments d'Astronomie</i> (1740).</p> <p><b>D'Alembert</b> : <i>Traité de Dynamique</i> (1743).</p> <p><b>Abbé Nollet</b> : <i>Leçons de physique expérimentale</i> (1743).</p>	<p><b>Richardson</b> : <i>Pamela</i> (1740).</p> <p><b>Pope</b> (d. 1744).</p> <p><b>Swift</b> (d. 1745).</p> <p><b>Richardson</b> : <i>Clarissa Harlowe</i> (1748).</p> <p><b>Klopstock</b> : <i>La Messiade</i> (cantos I-III) (1748).</p>	<p>Treaty of Vienne (1738).</p> <p>War of the Austrian Succession (1740).</p> <p><b>Frédérick II</b> in Silésie (1740).</p> <p>Retreat of Bohemia (1742).</p> <p><b>Fleury</b> (d. 1743).</p> <p>Victory of Fontenoy (1745).</p> <p>Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748).</p>



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Sacred and profane Eloquence.	Novels.	Sciences and Arts	Foreign Literatures.	Historical Synchronisms.
<b>Buffon</b> : <i>Discours sur le style</i> (1753).	Translation of <i>Clarisse Harlowe</i> , of <b>Richardson</b> by abbé <b>Prévost</b> (1751)  <b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Candide</i> (1758).	<b>Cssaini</b> (d. 1756).  <b>A. de Jussieu</b> (d. 1758).	<b>Gessner</b> : <i>Idylles</i> (1756).    <b>A. Smith</b> : <i>Senti- ment moral</i> (1759).	The Seven Years' War (1756-63).    Defeat of Rosbach (1757).   <b>Choiseul</b> , Prime Minister (1758-70).
	<b>Rousseau</b> : <i>La Nouvelle Héloïse</i> (1761).  <b>Marmontel</b> : <i>Con- tes moraux</i> (1761).  <b>Marmontel</b> : <i>Béli- saire</i> (1767). <b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Jeannot et Colin</i> (1764).  <b>Voltaire</b> : <i>L'In- genu</i> (1767).  <b>Voltaire</b> : <i>L'Homme aux 40 écus</i> (1768).	<b>Clairaut</b> : <i>Les Co- mètes</i> (1760). <b>Franklin</b> : <i>Le pa- ratonnerre</i> (1760). <b>Rameau</b> (d. 1764).  <b>Greuze</b> : <i>L'Accor- dée de village</i> (1766).  <b>Nattier</b> (d. 1766).  <b>Travels of Bou- gainville (1768).</b>	<b>Goldoni</b> in Paris (1760). <b>Mac-Pherson</b> : <i>Ossian</i> (1760). <b>Reid</b> : <i>L'Entende- ment humain</i> (1763).  <b>Beccaria</b> : <i>Délits et peines</i> (1764).  <b>Lessing</b> : <i>Laocoon</i> (1765).   <b>Goldsmith</b> : <i>The Vicar of Wake- field</i> (1766). <b>Lessing</b> : <i>Drama- turgie de Ham- bourg</i> (1767).	Treaty of Paris (1763).    Expulsion of the Jesuits (1764).

Dates.	Theatre.	Diverse genres of Poetry.	Theology, Philosophy, Politics, and Morals.	History, Memoirs, Epistles, Salons.	Criticism.
1760.	<b>De Belloy</b> : <i>Le Siège de Calais</i> (1765). <b>Beaumarchais</b> : <i>Eugénie</i> (1767). <b>Sedaine</b> : <i>La Gaucheur imprévue</i> (1768). <b>Ducis</b> : <i>Hamlet</i> (1769). <b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Les Guêbres</i> (1769).	<b>Saint-Lambert</b> : <i>Les Saisons</i> (1764). <b>Delille</b> : <i>Géorgiques</i> (1769). <b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Épître à Boileau</i> (1769).	<b>Turgot</b> : <i>Essai sur les richesses</i> (1766). <b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Examen de milord Bolingbroke</i> (1769). <b>Condillac</b> : <i>Cours d'études</i> (1769).	<b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Siècle de Louis XIV</i> (1768).  <b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Hist. du Parlement</i> (1769).	
1770.	<b>Poinsinet</b> : <i>Le Cercle</i> (1771), <b>Ducis</b> : <i>Romeo et Juliette</i> (1771). <b>Beaumarchais</b> : <i>Le Barbier de Séville</i> (1775).  <b>Letourneur</b> : Translation of Shakespeare (1776-80). <b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Irène</i> (1778). <b>Ducis</b> : <i>Edipe chez Admète</i> (1778).	<b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Épître à Horace</i> (1772).  <b>Gilbert</b> : <i>Le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle</i> (1775).  <b>Gresset</b> (d. 1777).  <b>Gilbert</b> : <i>Mon Apologie</i> (1778). <b>Roucher</b> : <i>Les Mots</i> (1779).	<b>D'Holbach</b> : <i>Système de la nature</i> (1770). <b>Helvétius</b> (d. 1771). <b>Buffon</b> : <i>Suite de l'Histoire Naturelle</i> (1771-86). <i>The Encyclopédie</i> achieved (1771). <b>Voltaire</b> : <i>La Bible expliquée</i> (1776).  <b>Condorcet</b> : ed. of the <i>Pensées de Pascal</i> , with commentaries of Voltaire (1776). <b>Buffon</b> : <i>Époques de la Nature</i> (1778). <b>Voltaire</b> (d. 1778).  <b>Rousseau</b> (d. 1778).	<b>L'abbé Galiani</b>   <b>M<sup>re</sup> d'Épinay</b>  <b>M<sup>re</sup> Geoffroy</b> (d. 1777).	<b>Meister</b> : continues la Correspondance Grimm (1773-8).  <b>Voltaire</b> : <i>Lettres à l'Acad. de Shakespeare</i> (1776).
1780.	<b>Ducis</b> : <i>Le Roi Lear</i> (1783). <b>Beaumarchais</b> : <i>Le Mariage de Figaro</i> (1784). <b>Collin d'Harleville</b> : <i>L'Optimiste</i> (1788). <b>M.-J. Chénier</b> : <i>Charles IX</i> (1789).	<b>Gilbert</b> (d. 1780).  <b>Delille</b> : <i>Les Jardins</i> (1782).  <b>A. Chénier</b> writes his <i>Idylles</i> , his <i>Élégies</i> and his <i>Eglogues</i> , from 1785 to 1791.	<b>Rousseau</b> : <i>Confessions</i> (1782) (post.). <b>D'Alembert</b> (d. 1783). <b>B. de Saint-Pierre</b> : <i>Études de la nature</i> (1784). <b>Diderot</b> (d. 1784).	<b>M<sup>re</sup> du Deffand</b> (d. 1780).   <b>Mirabeau</b> .	<b>La Harpe</b> : <i>Cours au Ly.</i> (1786-98). <b>Marmontel</b> : <i>de littérature</i> (1787).  <b>M<sup>re</sup> de Staël</b> : <i>Lettres de Rousseau</i> (1788).



Sacred and profane Eloquence.	Novels.	Sciences and Arts.	Foreign Literatures.	Historical Synchronisms.
	Diderot : <i>Jacques le fataliste, le Neveu de Rameau</i> (published in the xix century).			Famine Pact (1768).
Beaumarchais : <i>Mémoires</i> (1773).	Translation of Goethe's <i>Werther</i> (1776).	Boucher (d 1770). Pigalle : <i>Statue de de Voltaire</i> (1770). Glück : <i>Orphée</i> (1774). Glück : <i>Iphigénie</i> (1774). Lavoisier : <i>Théorie de la combustion</i> (1775).	Klopstock : <i>Fin de la Messiade</i> (1773). Goethe : <i>Götz de Berlichingen</i> (1773). Goethe : <i>Werther</i> (1774).	Louis XV (d. 1774). Accession of Louis XVI (1774).
	Marmontel : <i>Les Incas</i> (1777).	Houdon : <i>Statue de Voltaire</i> (1776). Glück : <i>Aimide</i> (1777). Quarrel of the glückistes and of piccinists. Linné (d. 1778). Chardin (d. 1779).	Lessing : <i>Nathan le Sage</i> (1779). Schiller : <i>Les Brigands</i> (1780).	First min. of Necker (1776-81). The American War (1776-83).
	B. de St-Pierre : <i>Paul et Virginie</i> (1787).	Grétry : <i>Richard Cœur-de-Lion</i> (1784). Pigalle (d. 1785). Mozart : <i>Noces de Figaro</i> (1786). Travels of La Pérouse (1787).	Kant : <i>Critique de la Raison pure</i> (1781). Métastase (d. 1782). Herder : <i>Philosophie de l'histoire</i> (1784).	Treaty of Versailles (1783). Frédéric II (d. 1786). Recall of Necker (1788).

Dates.	Theatre.	Diverse genres of Poetry.	Theology, Philosophy, Politics and Morals.	History, Memoirs, Epistles, Salons	Criticism.
1780.	—	—	—	—	—
			Buffon (d. 1788). D'Holbach (d. 1789).	M <sup>me</sup> Roland.	Barthélemy : <i>Voyages d'un jeune Anachoriste</i> (1788).
1790.	Fabre d'Eglantine : <i>Le Philinte de Molière</i> (1790). Beaumarchais : <i>La Mère coupable</i> (1791). Collin d'Harleville : <i>Le vieux célibataire</i> (1792). Ducis : <i>Othello</i> (1792). Ducis : <i>Abufar</i> (1795). Laya : <i>L'Ami des lois</i> (1793). Maillot : <i>Madame Angot</i> (1796). Lemercier : <i>Agamemnon</i> (1797). Pixérécourt : <i>Victor ou l'Enfant de la forêt</i> (1798). Beaumarchais : (d. 1799).	Florian : <i>Fables</i> (1792).  A. Chénier : <i>Iambes</i> (1794). A. Chénier (d. 1794).  Roucher (d. 1794). Florian (d. 1794).  Delille : <i>L'Homme des champs</i> (1800).	Volney : <i>Les Ruines</i> (1791).  Condorcet (d. 1794).  Condorcet : <i>Progress de l'esprit humain</i> (1795) (posth). J de Maistre : <i>Considérations sur la France</i> (1796). M <sup>me</sup> de Staël : <i>Des Passions</i> (1796).  Chateaubriand : <i>Essai sur les Révolutions</i> (1797).	M <sup>me</sup> Necker (1794).	La Harpe : <i>Lycée</i> (1799).  M <sup>me</sup> de Staël : <i>De la Littérature</i> (1800).
1800.					



Sacred and profane Eloquence.	Novels.	Sciences and Arts.	Foreign Literatures.	Historical Synchronisms.
Assembly Consti- tuent (1789). Mirabeau, Maury, Barnave.			Gœthe : <i>Iphigénie</i> (1789).	The Estates-General. Taking of the Bastille. (1789).
Legislative Assem- bly (1791). <i>The</i> <i>Girondins.</i> <i>The Convention</i> (1792). <i>The Giron-</i> <i>dins.</i>	B. de St-Pierre : <i>La Chaumière in-</i> <i>dienne</i> (1791).	Falconet (d. 1791).  Mozart (d. 1791).	Schiller : <i>Guerre</i> <i>de Trente Ans</i> (1791).  Goldoni (d. 1793).	Mirabeau (d. 1791).  Proclamation of Re- public (1792). Valmy (1792).
Vergniaud, Danton,  Robespierre, de Sèze.	X. de Maistre : <i>Voyage autour de</i> <i>ma chambre</i> (1794).	Lavoisier (d. 1794).  Laplace : <i>Méca-</i> <i>nique céleste</i> (1799).	Beccaria (d. 1794).  Gœthe : <i>Faust</i> (1798). Gœthe : <i>Hermann</i> <i>et Dorothée</i> (1798).  Schiller ; Wal- enstein (1799).	The Convention (1792). Execution of Louis XVI (1793). The Terror (1793-94).  The Directory (1795). First Camp. of Italy (1796). Treaty of Campo- Formio (1797).  The 18 brumaire (1799). The Consulate (1800)





History, Memoirs, Epistles.	Novels.	Sciences and Arts.	Foreign Literatures.	Historical Synchronisms.
	<b>Chateaubriand :</b> <i>Atala</i> (1801)			The Concordat (1801).
	<b>M<sup>me</sup> de Staël :</b> <i>Delphine</i> (1802).		<b>Schiller :</b> <i>Guillaume Tell</i> (1804).	Peace of Amiens (1802)
	<b>Chateaubriand :</b> <i>René</i> (1804).		<b>Schiller</b> (d. 1805).	<b>Bonaparte</b> is appointed consul for life (1802).
	<b>M<sup>me</sup> de Staël :</b> <i>Corinne</i> (1807).		<b>Byron :</b> <i>Heures de loisir</i> (1807).	The Empire (1804-14); Austerlitz (1805).
<b>Chateaubriand :</b> <i>Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem</i> (1811).	<b>Chateaubriand :</b> <i>Les Martyrs</i> (1809).			
<b>Guizot :</b> Lectures at the Sorbonne (1812-1814).	<b>X. de Maistre :</b> <i>Le Lépreux de la cité d'Aoste</i> (1811).	<b>Cuvier :</b> <i>Recherches sur les ossements fossiles</i> (1812-22).	<b>Niebuhr :</b> <i>Hist. romaine</i> (1811).	Iéna (1806). Treaty of Tilsitt (1807). Wagram (1809).
<b>Chateaubriand :</b> <i>De Buonaparte et des Bourbons</i> (1814).			<b>Byron :</b> <i>Child-Harold</i> (chap. I et II) (1812). <b>W. Scott :</b> <i>Waverley</i> (1814).	Retreat of Russia (1812). Treaty of Paris (1814). First Restoration (1814).
<b>A. Thierry</b> at the <i>Censeur européen</i> (1817-20).	<b>B. Constant :</b> <i>Adolphe</i> (1816).	<b>Géricault :</b> <i>Le Radeau de la Méduse</i> (1819).	<b>Byron :</b> <i>Manfred</i> (1816).	The Hundred Days (1815). Waterloo (1815).
<b>A. Thierry</b> at the <i>Courrier français</i> (1820). ( <i>Lettres sur l'hist. de France</i> ).	<b>Nodier :</b> <i>Jean Sbo-gar</i> (1818).	<b>Champollion</b> deciphered the sense of the hieroglyphics (1821).		Second Restoration (1815-30).
	<b>Nodier :</b> <i>Trilby</i> (1822).	<b>Cuvier :</b> <i>Discours sur les révolutions du globe</i> (1821).	<b>Schopenhauer :</b> <i>Le Monde comme représentation et volonté</i> (1819).	<b>Louis XVIII</b> (1815-24). Assassination of the Duke de Berry (1820).
<b>Guizot :</b> Lectures (1820-22).	<b>Hugo :</b> <i>Han d'Islande</i> (1823).	<b>Berthollet</b> (d. 1824).	<b>Manzoni :</b> <i>Carma-gnola</i> (1820).	<b>Napoléon</b> (d. 1821).
<b>M<sup>me</sup> de Staël :</b> <i>Dix ans d'exil</i> (1821) post.		<b>Delacroix :</b> <i>Mas-sacre de Chio</i> (1824).		War in Spain (1823).
<b>Guizot :</b> <i>Gouvernement représentatif</i> (1821).		<b>Louis David</b> (d. 1825).	<b>W. Scott :</b> <i>Ivanhoe</i> (1820).	<b>Charles X</b> (1824-30).
	<b>Hugo :</b> <i>Bug Jargal</i> (1825).	<b>Boieldieu :</b> <i>La Dame blanche</i> (1825).	<b>Goethe :</b> <i>Wilhelm Meister</i> (1821).	Navarin (1827).
<b>Thiers :</b> <i>Hist. de la Révolution</i> (1823-27).	<b>Vigny :</b> <i>Cinq-Mars</i> (1826).		<b>H. Heine :</b> <i>Poésies</i> (1822).	

Dates.	Theatre.	Poetry.	Philosophy.	Eloquence.	Criticism and Newspapers.
1824.	<b>Scribe</b> : <i>Le Mariage d'argent</i> (1827). <b>Scribe</b> : <i>Les Trois Quartiers</i> (1827). <b>Hugo</b> : <i>Cromwell</i> (1827). Representations of Shakespeare in Paris, by an English company (1828). <b>C. Delavigne</b> : <i>Marino Faliero</i> (1829). <b>A. Dumas père</b> : <i>Henri III</i> (1829).  <b>A. de Vigny</b> : <i>Othello</i> (1829).	<b>Lamartine</b> : <i>Chant du Sacre</i> . <b>Lamartine</b> : <i>Pèlerinage d'Harold</i> (1825). <b>Hugo</b> : <i>Odes et Ballades</i> (1826). <b>Vigny</b> : <i>Poèmes antiques et modernes</i> (1826). <b>Ém. Deschamps</b> : <i>Poésies</i> (1828). <b>Sainte-Beuve</b> : <i>Joseph Delorme</i> (1829). <b>Hugo</b> : <i>Orientales</i> (1829).  <b>Musset</b> : <i>Premières poésies</i> (1829).	<b>B. Constant</b> : <i>La Religion</i> (1824).  <b>Destutt de Tracy</b> : <i>Idéologie</i> (1824).  <b>Ballanche</b> : <i>Pa-lingénésie</i> (1827).  <b>Cousin</b> : <i>Lectures</i> (1828-30).		<b>Le Globe</b> (1824-1830). <b>Hugo</b> : <i>Préf. Cromwell</i> (1827).  <b>Villemain</b> : <i>Litt. au Moyen Âge</i> (1828). <b>Litt. au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle</b> (1828). <b>Sainte-Beuve</b> : <i>Poésie au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle</i> (1828).  Foundation of <i>Revue des Deux Mondes</i> (1828).
1830.	<b>Hugo</b> : <i>Hernani</i> (1830).  <b>Hugo</b> : <i>Marion Delorme</i> (1831). <b>A. Dumas père</b> : <i>Antony</i> (1831). <b>Vigny</b> : <i>La Maréchale d'Ancre</i> (1831). <b>Hugo</b> : <i>Le Roi s'amuse</i> (1832). <b>C. Delavigne</b> : <i>Louis XI</i> (1832).  <b>Dumas père</b> : <i>La Tour de Nesle</i> (1832). <b>Hugo</b> : <i>Lucrèce Borgia</i> (1833). <b>Hugo</b> : <i>Marie Tudor</i> (1833). <b>Scribe</b> : <i>Bertrand et Raton</i> (1833). <b>Musset</b> : <i>Lorenzaccio</i> (1834).	<b>Lamartine</b> : <i>Harmonies</i> (1830).  <b>Musset</b> : <i>Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie</i> (1830).  <b>Sainte-Beuve</b> : <i>Les Consolations</i> (1830). <b>Barbier</b> : <i>Iambes</i> (1831).  <b>Hugo</b> : <i>Feuilles d'automne</i> (1831). <b>Th. Gautier</b> : <i>Albertus</i> (1832). <b>Brizeux</b> : <i>Marie</i> (1832). <b>Musset</b> : <i>Rolla</i> (1833). <b>Béranger</b> : <i>Chansons</i> (1833).	<b>Lamennais</b> : <i>L'Avenir</i> (1830).         <b>Jouffroy</b> : <i>Mélanges philosophiques</i> (1833).  <b>Lamennais</b> : <i>Paroles d'un croyant</i> (1834).	<b>Casimir Périer</b> . <b>Guizot</b> .  <b>Berryer</b> .   <b>Montalembert</b> .         <b>Thiers</b> .  <b>Lamartine</b> .	<b>A. Carrel</b> founded <i>Le National</i> (1830).  <b>Sainte-Beuve</b> at the <i>Revue des Deux Mondes</i> and <i>Revue de Paris</i> . <b>Fauriel</b> : <i>Lectures on the reign of literature at the Sorbonne</i> (1830-40).  <b>Émile de Girardin</b> founded <i>Presse</i> (1833).

History, Memoirs, Epistles.	Novels.	Sciences and Arts.	Foreign Literatures.	Historical Synchronisms.
<b>Guizot</b> : <i>Essais sur l'hist. de France</i> (1823).			<b>Byron</b> (d. 1824).	Independence of Greece acknowledged (1828).
<b>de Barante</b> : <i>Hist. des Ducs de Bourgogne</i> (1825).		<b>Beethoven</b> (d. 1827).	<b>Manzoni</b> : <i>Promessi sposi</i> (1827).	Taking of Alger (1830).
<b>A. Thierry</b> : <i>Conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands</i> (1825).	<b>Mérimée</b> : <i>Nouvelles</i> (1829-40).	<b>Rossini</b> : <i>Guillaume Tell</i> (1829).		The Ordinances. Revolution of 1830.
<b>Guizot</b> : <i>Révo. d'Angleterre</i> (1826).	<b>Mérimée</b> : <i>Chronique de Ch. IX</i> (1829).			<b>Louis-Philippe</b> (1830-43).
<b>Guizot</b> : <i>Civilisation en Europe</i> (1828).				
<b>Guizot</b> : <i>Lectures</i> (1828-30). Ed. of the <i>Mémoires de Saint-Simon</i> (1829).				
	<b>Hugo</b> : <i>N.-D. de Paris</i> (1831).	<b>Meyerbeer</b> : <i>Robert le Diable</i> (1831).	<b>Goethe</b> (d. 1832).	<b>Casimir-Perier</b> , Prime Minister (1831-32).
	<b>Stendhal</b> : <i>Le Rouge et le Noir</i> (1831).	<b>Cuvier</b> (d. 1832).	<b>W. Scott</b> (d. 1832).	
<b>Michelet</b> : <i>Hist. de France (Middle Ages)</i> (1833-43).	<b>G. Sand</b> : <i>Indiana</i> (1832).	<b>Ampère</b> : <i>Essai sur la philosophie des Sciences</i> (1834-44).	<b>S. Pellico</b> : <i>Mie Prigioni</i> (1833).	Criminal attempt of Fieschi (1835).
	<b>Vigny</b> : <i>Stello</i> (1832).			
<b>Thierry</b> : <i>Dix ans d'Etudes historiques</i> (1834).	<b>Balzac</b> : <i>Eugénie Grandet</i> (1833).			
<b>Tocqueville</b> : <i>La Démocratie en Amérique</i> (1835).	<b>Balzac</b> : <i>Le Père Goriot</i> (1834). <b>Vigny</b> : <i>Serv. et grandeur militaires</i> (1835).		<b>Dickens</b> : <i>Pikwick</i> (1836).	<b>Guizot</b> , Prime Minister (1836).





History, Memoirs, Epistles.	Novels.	Sciences and Arts.	Foreign Literatures.	Historical Synchronisms.
<b>Martin</b> : <i>Hist. France</i> (1837-54).	<b>Balzac</b> : <i>Le Lys dans la vallée</i> (1835).	<b>Ampère</b> (d. 1836).	<b>Dickens</b> : <i>Nicolas Nickleby</i> (1839).	<b>Molé</b> , Prime Minister (1837).
<b>Jerry</b> : <i>Récits des temps mérovingiens</i> (1840).	<b>Musset</b> : <i>Confession d'un enfant du siècle</i> (1836).	<b>Meyerbeer</b> : <i>Les Huguenots</i> (1836).		
<b>Louis Blanc</b> : <i>Hist. de Dix Ans</i> (1841-46).	<b>Stendhal</b> : <i>La Chartreuse de Parme</i> (1839).	<b>P. Delaroche</b> : Hemicycle of the Beaux-Arts (1837-41).		<b>Thiers</b> , Prime Minister (1840).
<b>Thiers</b> : <i>Consulat Empire</i> (1845-62).	<b>Mérimée</b> : <i>Colomba</i> (1840).		<b>Gogol</b> : <i>Les âmes mortes</i> (1842).	<b>Duke d'Orléans</b> (d. 1842).
<b>Ignet</b> : <i>Antonio Pérez et Philippe II</i> (1845).	<b>E. Sue</b> : <i>Les Mystères de Paris</i> (1844).	<b>Wagner</b> : <i>Tannhauser</i> (1845).	<b>Macaulay</b> : <i>Essays</i> (1843).	
<b>ichelet</b> : <i>Hist. de la Révolution</i> (1847-53).	<b>A. Dumas père</b> : <i>Les Mousquetaires</i> (1844).	<b>Le Verrier</b> : discovered Neptune (1846).	<b>Tourguenef</b> : <i>Récits d'un chasseur</i> (1847).	
<b>Lamartine</b> : <i>Hist. des Girondins</i> (1847).	<b>G. Sand</b> : <i>Le Meunier d'Angibaut</i> (1845).		<b>Macaulay</b> : <i>History of England</i> (1848-55).	Revolution of 1848.
<b>Guinet</b> : <i>Révolution d'Italie</i> (1848).	<b>Mérimée</b> : <i>Carmen</i> (1847).	<b>Meyerbeer</b> : <i>Le Prophète</i> (1849).		<b>Lamartine</b> .
<b>Chateaubriand</b> : <i>Mem. d'Outre-tombe</i> (1849) posth.	<b>J. Sandeau</b> : <i>M<sup>lle</sup> de la Seiglière</i> (1848).	<b>Wagner</b> : <i>Lohengrin</i> (1850).		<b>Louis-Napoléon</b> appointed President.
<b>ocqueville</b> : <i>L'Ancien régime et la Révolution</i> (1850).	<b>G. Sand</b> : <i>La Mare au diable. La Petite Fadette</i> (1848).			
	<b>Balzac</b> (d. 1850).			



History, Memoirs, Epistles.	Novels.	Sciences, and Arts.	Foreign Literatures.	Historical Synchronisms.
<b>Thierry</b> : <i>Essai sur le Tiers Etat</i> (1853).	<b>G. Sand</b> : <i>Les Maitres Sonneurs</i> (1852).	<b>Courbet</b> : <i>L'enterrement à Ornans</i> (1851).	<b>Gogol</b> (d. 1852). <b>Tourgueniev</b> : <i>Journal d'un Chasseur</i> (1852).	Coup d'État by Louis Napoléon (2 déc 1851).
<b>ignot</b> : <i>Charles-Quint</i> (1854).		<b>Arago</b> (d. 1853).	<b>Mommsen</b> : <i>Histoire romaine</i> (1854-56).	<b>Napoléon III</b> (1852-70).
<b>ichelet</b> : <i>Hist. de France</i> (from François I <sup>er</sup> to 1789) (1855-67).				The Crimean War (1854-55).
<b>bout</b> : <i>La Grèce contemporaine</i> (1855).	<b>Flaubert</b> : <i>Mme Bovary</i> (1857).	<b>Verdi</b> : <i>Le Trouvère</i> (1857).	<b>H. Heine</b> (d. 1856).	Treaty of Paris (1856).
<b>A. Thierry</b> (d. 1856).	<b>O. Feuillet</b> : <i>Le Roman d'un jeune homme pauvre</i> (1858).	<b>Gounod</b> : <i>Faust</i> (1859).	<b>Tourgueniev</b> : <i>Un Nid de Seigneurs</i> (1859).	Criminal attempt of Orsini (1858).
<b>uizot</b> : <i>Mémoires</i> (1858-68).	<b>Th. Gautier</b> : <i>Le Capitaine Fracasse</i> (1861).	<b>Wagner</b> : <i>Tristan et Iseult</i> (1859).	<b>Darwin</b> : <i>Origin of species</i> (1859).	Magenta (1859).
<b>ontalembert</b> : <i>Les Moines d'Occident</i> (1860-67).	<b>G. Sand</b> : <i>le Marquis de Villemer</i> (1861).		<b>G. Eliot</b> : <i>Adam Bede</i> (1859).	Solférino (1859).
<b>C. Rousset</b> : <i>Louvois</i> (1863).	<b>Hugo</b> : <i>Les Misérables</i> (1862).		<b>G. Eliot</b> : <i>Silas Marner</i> (1861).	Peace of Villafranca (1859).
<b>enan</b> : <i>Hist. des Origines du Christianisme</i> (1863-85).	<b>Flaubert</b> : <i>Salammbô</i> (1862).			Annexation of Savoy to France (1860).
<b>de Coulanges</b> : <i>La Cité antique</i> (1864).	<b>Fromentin</b> : <i>Dominique</i> (1863).			Taking of Pékin (1861).
	<b>Cherbuliez</b> : <i>le Comte Kostia</i> (1863.)			Formation of the kingdom of Italy (1861).
	<b>Hugo</b> : <i>Les Travailleurs de la mer</i> (1866).	<b>Manet</b> : <i>Olympia</i> (1865).	<b>Dostoïewsky</b> : <i>Crime et châtiment</i> (1865).	Expedition in Mexico (1861-64).
	<b>O. Feuillet</b> : <i>M. de Camors</i> (1867).	<b>Millet</b> : <i>L'Angelus</i> (1867).		Sadowa (1866).
	<b>Daudet</b> : <i>Le Petit Chose</i> (1868).			Universal exhibition (1867).
	<b>Hugo</b> : <i>L'homme qui rit</i> (1869).	<b>Wagner</b> : <i>Les Maitres chanteurs</i> (1868).		

Dates.	Theatre.	Poetry.	Philosophy	Eloquence.	Criticism and Newspaper.
1851.	<b>Ponsard</b> : <i>Le Lion amoureux</i> (1866). <b>A. Dumas fils</b> : <i>Les Idées de M<sup>me</sup> Aubray</i> (1867). <b>Ponsard</b> (d. 1867). <b>V. Sardou</b> : <i>Patrie</i> (1869). <b>Coppée</b> : <i>Le Passant</i> (1869).	<b>Sully Prudhomme</b> : <i>Stances et poèmes</i> (1865). <b>Coppée</b> : <i>Le Reliquaire</i> (1866). <b>Verlaine</b> : <i>Poèmes saturniens</i> (1866-90). <b>Lamartine</b> (d. 1869).	<b>Cousin</b> (d. 1867). <b>Ravaisson</b> : <i>La Philosophie en France au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle</i> (1868). <b>Taine</b> : <i>De l'intelligence</i> (1870).	<b>Rouher</b> .  <b>Em. Ollivier</b> .  <b>Dufaure</b> .	<b>Villemain</b> (d. 1867). <b>H. Rochefort</b> : <i>La Lanterne</i> (1869). <b>Ste-Beuve</b> (d. 1869). <b>Fromentin</b> : <i>Maîtres d'autrefois</i> (1870).
1871.	<b>A. Dumas fils</b> : <i>La Femme de Claude</i> (1873). <b>Bornier</b> : <i>La Fille de Roland</i> (1875). <b>A. Dumas fils</b> : <i>L'Etrangère</i> (1876). <b>Augier</b> : <i>Les Fourchambault</i> (1878). <b>V. Sardou</b> : <i>Daniel Rochat</i> (1880). <b>Pailleron</b> : <i>Le Monde où l'on s'ennuie</i> (1881). <b>H. Becque</b> : <i>Les Corbeaux</i> (1882). <b>Coppée</b> : <i>Severo Torelli</i> (1883). <b>V. Sardou</b> : <i>Dizereons</i> (1883).	<b>Coppée</b> : <i>Les Humbles</i> (1872). <b>Th. Gautier</b> (d. 1872). <b>Sully Prudhomme</b> : <i>Les Vaines Tendresses</i> (1872). <b>Richepin</b> : <i>La Chanson des Gueux</i> (1876). <b>Sully Prudhomme</b> : <i>La Justice</i> (1878). <b>Sully Prudhomme</b> : <i>Le Zénith</i> (1878). <b>Verlaine</b> : <i>Sagesse</i> (1881). <b>Lec. de Lisle</b> : <i>Poèmes tragiques</i> (1884).	<b>Litré</b> : <i>La Science au point de vue philosophique</i> (1873).  <b>Cl. Bernard</b> (d. 1878).  <b>Litré</b> (d. 1881).  <b>Th. Ribot</b> : <i>Les Maladies de la mémoire</i> (1881).  <b>Guyau</b> .	<b>Gambetta</b> .  <b>Buffet</b> .  <b>J. Ferry</b> .  <b>Cl. Bernard</b> (d. 1878).  <b>Litré</b> (d. 1881).  <b>Th. Ribot</b> : <i>Les Maladies de la mémoire</i> (1881).  <b>Guyau</b> .	<b>St. Marc Girardin</b> (d. 1871). <b>G. Boissier</b> : <i>Cicéron et ses amis</i> (1875). <b>St. Marc Girardin</b> : <i>J.-J. Rousseau</i> (1875). <b>L. Gautier</b> : <i>Epopées gauloises</i> (1876). <b>E. Faguet</b> : <i>Les sur les thèses</i> (1880-83). <b>F. Brunetier</b> : <i>Le Roman turc</i> (1881). <b>F. Brunetier</b> : <i>Etudes de philologie</i> (1881). <b>P. Bourge</b> : <i>saits de philologie</i> (1885).



History, Memoirs, and Epistles.	Novels.	Sciences and Arts.	Foreign Literatures.	Historical Synchronisms.
	<b>Flaubert</b> : <i>L'Éducation sentimentale</i> (1869).	<b>Berlioz</b> (d. 1869).	<b>Ibsen</b> : <i>Peer Gynt</i> (1867). <b>Tolstoï</b> : <i>La Guerre et la Paix</i> (1869).	Opening of the Suez canal (1869).  Council of the Vatican (1869).
	<b>A Dumas père</b> : (d. 1870). <b>Mérimée</b> (d. 1870).		<b>Dickens</b> (d. 1870).	<b>Ollivier</b> , Prime Minister (1870). Plebiscit (1870). The Franco-Prussian War (1870-71). Revolution of 4 sept. 1870. Republic (1870).
<b>Michelet</b> (d. 1874).  <b>Guizot</b> (d. 1874).  <b>Taine</b> : <i>Les Origines de la France contemporaine</i> (1875-93).  <b>Doudan</b> : <i>Mélanges et Lettres</i> (1876).  <b>Thiers</b> (d. 1877).	<b>Zola</b> : <i>Les Rougon-Macquart</i> (1871-1893). <b>A. Daudet</b> : <i>Tartarin</i> (1872). <b>F. Fabre</b> : <i>L'abbé Tigrane</i> (1873). <b>G. Sand</b> (d. 1876).  <b>Daudet</b> : <i>Le Nabab</i> (1877).  <b>Flaubert</b> (d. 1880).	<b>Carpeaux</b> (d. 1875).  <b>Bell</b> : <i>The telephone</i> (1879).  <b>Le Verrier</b> (d. 1876). <b>Edison</b> : <i>The phonograph</i> (1877). <b>Courbet</b> (d. 1877).  <b>Wagner</b> : <i>Parsifal</i> (1882).	<b>Tolstoï</b> : <i>Anna Karénine</i> (1877).  <b>Ibsen</b> : <i>Maison de Poupée</i> (1879).  <b>G. Eliot</b> (d. 1880).  <b>Ibsen</b> : <i>Les Revenants</i> (1881). <b>Dostoïewsky</b> (d. 1881).  <b>Tourgueniev</b> (d. 1883).  <b>Ibsen</b> : <i>Le Canard sauvage</i> (1884).	Treaty of Francfort (1871).  Insurrection of the Communists (1871).  <b>Thiers</b> , President (1871).  <b>Mac-Mahon</b> , President (1873).  <b>Napoleon III</b> (d. 1873). Vote of the Constitution (1875).  <b>Alphonse XII</b> (1874-85).  Thiers (d. 1877).  <b>J. Grévy</b> , President (1878). The « <i>Triple Alliance</i> » (1879).  Conquest of Tunis (1884-85).  <b>Gambetta</b> (d. 1882).
<b>A. Sorel</b> : <i>L'Europe et la Révolution</i> (1885-92).  <b>A. Sorel</b> : <i>L'Europe et la Révolution</i> (1885-92).	<b>Loti</b> : <i>Le mariage de Loti</i> (1880). <b>A. France</b> : <i>Le Crime de S. Bonnard</i> (1881).  <b>Daudet</b> : <i>Sapho</i> (1884).  <b>Zola</b> : <i>Germinal</i> (1885).	<b>Wagner</b> (d. 1883).		

Dates	Theatre.	Poetry.	Philosophy.	Eloquence.	Criticism and Newspapers
1890.	<b>Bornier</b> : <i>L'Apôtre</i> (1883).	<b>V. Hugo</b> (d. 1885).		<b>Le P. Didon.</b>	<b>J. Lemaitre</b> : <i>Les Contemporains</i> (1886-1900).
	<b>Richepin</b> : <i>Nana-Sahib</i> (1883).	<b>Richepin</b> : <i>La Mer</i> (1886).			<b>O Gréard</b> : <i>L'Education des femmes</i> (1886).
	<b>H. Becque</b> : <i>La Parisienne</i> (1885).	<b>Sully Prudhomme</b> : <i>Le Bonheur</i> (1888).			<b>De Vogüé</b> : <i>Le Roman russe</i> (1886).
	<b>A. Dumas fils</b> : <i>Denise</i> (1885).				<b>J. Lemaitre</b> : <i>Impressions de théâtre</i> (1888-1898).
	The "Théâtre libre" (1887-95).		<b>Caro</b>		<b>Nisard</b> (d. 1888).
	<b>J. Lemaitre</b> : <i>Révoltée</i> (1889).				<b>E. Faguet</b> : <i>XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle</i> (1890).
	<b>J. Lemaitre</b> : <i>Le Député Leveau</i> (1891).				
	<b>Porto-Riche</b> : <i>Amoureuse</i> (1891).	<b>H. de Régnier</b> : <i>Episodes</i> (1888).	<b>P. Janet.</b>		<b>Brunetière</b> : <i>Les Epoques du théâtre français</i> (1892).
	<b>V. Sardou</b> : <i>Thermidor</i> (1891).	<b>Coppée</b> : <i>Paroles sincères</i> (1890).			<b>Brunetière</b> : <i>Evolution de la poésie lyrique</i> (1893).
	<b>Richepin</b> : <i>Par le glaive</i> (1892.)				<b>E. Faguet</b> : <i>Poétiques et moralistes</i> (1884-1900).
1900.	<b>V. Sardou</b> : <i>Mme Sans-Gêne</i> (1893).	<b>De Heredia</b> : <i>Les Trophées</i> (1893)	<b>Brochard.</b>		<b>J. Bédier</b> : <i>Les Fabliaux</i> (1895).
	<b>Lavedan</b> : <i>Le Prince d'Aurec</i> (1894).	<b>S. Mallarmé</b> : <i>Vers et prose</i> (1893).	<b>Boutroux.</b>		<b>F. Sarcey</b> (d. 1899).
	<b>Rostand</b> : <i>Les Romanesques</i> (1894).		<b>Liard.</b>		
	<b>Rostand</b> : <i>La Princesse lointaine</i> (1895).		<b>Renan</b> (d. 1892).		
	<b>Hervieu</b> : <i>Les Ténailles</i> (1895).		<b>Taine</b> (d. 1893).		
	<b>Rostand</b> : <i>La Samaritaine</i> (1897).		<b>Bergson.</b>		
	<b>Rostand</b> : <i>Cyrano de Bergerac</i> (1897).				
	<b>De Curel</b> : <i>Le Repas du lion</i> (1897).				
	<b>Rostand</b> : <i>L'Aiglon</i> (1900).				
	<b>Brieux</b> : <i>La robe rouge</i> (1900).				

History, Memoirs and Epistles.	Novels.	Sciences, and Arts.	Foreign Literatures.	Historical Synchronisms.
<b>Duruy</b> : <i>Hist. des Grecs</i> (1887).	<b>Bourget</b> : <i>Cruelle énigme</i> (1885). <b>Loti</b> : <i>Pêcheurs d'Islande</i> (1886). <b>Maupassant</b> : <i>Fort comme la mort</i> (1889).		<b>Sudermann</b> : <i>L'Honneur</i> (1888).	Conquest of Tonkin (1882-89). The <i>Boulangisme</i> (1887-88). <b>William II</b> Emperor (1888).
<b>Renan</b> : <i>Hist. du peuple d'Israël</i> (1887-91).	<b>Barrès</b> : <i>Le Jardin de Bérénice</i> (1889). <b>Bourget</b> : <i>Le Disciple</i> (1889).			<b>Sadi-Carnot</b> President (1887-94).
<b>F. de Coulanges</b> : <i>Institutions politiques de l'ancienne France</i> (1888).		<b>Meissonnier</b> (d. 1891).		Chino-Japanese War (1894-95).
<b>F. de Coulanges</b> : (d. 1889).		<b>Gounod</b> (d. 1893).	<b>Hauptmann</b> : <i>Les Tisserands</i> (1892). <b>Tennyson</b> (d. 1892).	<b>Nicholas II</b> (1894).
<b>Marbot</b> : <i>Mémoires</i> (1891) posth.		<b>Pasteur</b> (d. 1895).		Conquest of Madagascar (1895-99).
<b>A. Vandal</b> : <i>Napoléon et Alexandre</i> (1891-93).	<b>A. France</b> : <i>Le Lys rouge</i> (1894).	<b>P. Curie</b> : Le radium.		
<b>Lavisse</b> .		<b>Branly et Marconi</b> : La télégraphie sans fil.		
<b>Hanotaux</b> .		<b>Puvis de Chavannes</b> (d. 1898).	<b>Curtius</b> (d. 1896). <b>Swinburne</b> (d. 1898).	
<b>Chuquet</b>	<b>A. Daudet</b> (d. 1897).		<b>Ruskin</b> (d. 1899). <b>Tolstoï</b> : <i>Résurrection</i> (1900). <b>Nietzsche</b> (d. 1900).	Boer War (1899-1902).







## ALPHABETICAL INDEX

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This *Index* gives the names of all authors studied or quoted. It contains the titles of collective or anonymous works alone. The figures in bold type refer to the pages on which are to be found the biographies of celebrated authors and the studies of their principal works.

ABÉLARD, 24.  
Academy of Fourvières, 191, 312.  
ADAM DE LA HALLE, 94, **128**.  
ADDISON, 556.  
ADENET LE ROI, 38, 39.  
AILLY (PIERRE D'), 28.  
*Aimeri de Narbonne*, 40.  
ALAIN CHARTIER, **96**, 180.  
ALARCON, 294.  
ALBERT LE GRAND, 28.  
Albigenses, 29.  
ALEMBERT (D'), 610.  
ALEXANDRE DE BERNAY, 67.  
ALFIERI, 558, 700.  
ALIÉNOR DE GUIENNE, 22, 60.  
*Aliscans*, 41.  
Allegorical Literature in the Middle Ages, 69 to 74.  
Allegory in the Middle Ages, 66.  
*Ami et Amile*, 43.  
*Aminta* (L'), 260, 327.  
AMPÈRE, 813.  
AMYOT, 230.  
AMYRAUT (MOÏSE), 431.  
ANCELOT, 744.  
ANCEY (G ), 859.  
ANDRÉ DE LA VIGNE, 133, 136.  
*Ange* (L') *et* *l'Ermite*, 86.

ANGENNES (JULIE D'), 319.  
ANSELME (Saint), 24.  
Arab Invasions, 28.  
ARAGO, 813.  
ARGONNE (BONAVENTURE D'), 439.  
ARIOSTE (L'), 53, 177, 264.  
Aristocracy in the Middle Ages, 20.  
Aristotle's poetry, 261, 342.  
ARNAULD (ANGÉLIQUE), 354.  
ARNAULD (ANTOINE), 354.  
ARNAULD D'ANDILLY, 355.  
ARNAUD DE LUZANCY, 355.  
ARNAULD (LE GRAND), 355.  
ARNAULT (A.-V.), 706.  
Arthur, 56.  
Arts in the Middle Ages, 26.  
— xvi century, 176.  
— xvii century, 292.  
— xviii century, 555.  
— xix century, 696.  
*Arts d'Amour*, 56, 66.  
Assonance, 36.  
Aube, 90.  
AUBIGNAC (Abbé d'), 343.  
AUBIGNÉ (AGRIPPA D'), **212**, 275.  
AUBIGNÉ (CONSTANT D'), 462.  
*Aucassin et Nicolette*, 63.  
AUDIN, 506.

- AUGIER (EM.), 851.  
*Augustinus*, 356.  
*Aveugles (les Trois) de Compiègne*, 86.  
 AVIANUS, 77.
- BACON (FRANÇOIS), 178, 294.  
 BACON (ROGER), 28.  
 BAÏF (A. DE), 240, 264.  
 BAÏF (LAZARE DE), 255.  
 Balette, 90.  
 Ballade, 92.  
 BALLANCHE, 787.  
 BALZAC (GUEZ DE), 313.  
 BALZAC (HONORÉ DE), 873.  
*Banquet (Condamnation de)*, 134.  
 BANVILLE (THÉODORE DE), 757.  
 BAOUR-LORMIAN, 710.  
 BARANTE (DE), 824.  
 BARBIER, 755.  
 BARNAVE, 680.  
 BARON, 504.  
 BARRÈS (MAURICE).  
 BARTAS (DU), 211.  
 BASOCHÉ (Clercs de la), 127.  
 BATAILLE (HENRI), 863.  
 BAUDELAIRE, 757.  
*Baudouin (Histoire de)*, 142.  
 BAYARD, 850.  
 BAYLE (PIERRE), 548, 563.  
 BAZIN (RENÉ), 883.  
 BEAUMARCHAIS, 662.  
 BECCARIA, 558.  
 BECQUE, 858.  
 BELLAY (GUILLAUME DU), 208.  
 BELLAY (JEAN DU), 208.  
 BELLAY (JOACHIM DU), 208.  
 BELLEAU (RÉMI), 209, 265.  
*Belle Doctte*, 90.  
 BELLOY (DE), 655.  
 BENOÎT DE SAINTE-MORE, 68, 69, 141.  
 BENSERADE, 318, 518.  
 BÉRANGER, 795.  
 BERGSON, 754.  
 BERNARD (CLAUDE), 814.  
 BERNARD DE VENTADOUR, 93.  
 BERNARD (SAINT), 158.  
 BERNARDIN DE SAINT-PIERRE, 634.  
 BERNSTEIN (HENRI), 863.  
 BÉROUL, 58.  
 BERRYER, 841.  
 BERTAUT, 312.
- Berte, femme du roi Pépin*, 112.  
*Berte aux grands pieds*, 38.  
 BERTRAND DE BORN, 93.  
 Bestiaires, 75.  
 BEXON (ABBÉ), 616.  
 BÈZE (THÉODORE DE), 271.  
*Bible Mazarine*, 166.  
 Bibliothèque bleue, 37.  
 Bibliothèque des romans, 37.  
*Bien-Avisé et Mal-Avisé*, 133.  
 BLANC (LOUIS), 831.  
 BLONDEL DE NESLE, 93.  
 BOCCACE, 30, 113, 177.  
 BODEL (JEAN), 39, 66, 93, 110.  
 BODIN (JEAN), 277.  
 BOILEAU, 520 à 529.  
 BOISROBERT, 312, 478.  
 BOISSAT, 506.  
 BOISSIER (GASTON), 806.  
 BOISSONADE, 712.  
 BOJARDO, 53.  
 BOLINGBROKE, 580.  
 BONALD (DE), 787.  
 BONAVENTURE DES PÉRIERS, 226.  
 BORNIER (HENRI DE), 782.  
 BOSSUET, 375 à 395.  
 BOURDALOÛE, 395-398.  
 BOURGET (P.), 883.  
 BOURSALT, 475, 504, 518.  
 BOUTROUX, 795.  
 BRANTÔME, 228.  
 Breton Stories, 54.  
 BRIDAINÉ, 677.  
 BRIEUX, 862.  
 BRIFAUT, 707.  
 BRIZEUX, 755.  
 BROCHARD, 795.  
 BROGLIE (DUC VICTOR DE), 839.  
 BROTHERHOODS, in the Middle Ages, 115.  
 BRUNETIÈRE (F.), 808.  
 BRUNETTO LATINI, 75.  
*Brut (Roman de)*, 57, 141.  
 BUCHANAN, 255.  
 BUFFON, 613 à 618.  
 Burlesque (Genre) in the XVII century, 444.  
 BUSSY-RABUTIN, 431.  
 BYRON, 699.
- CABANIS, 792.  
 CAIGNIEZ, 710.  
 CALDERON, 294, 701.

- CALVIN, 168, 269.  
 CAMOENS, 178.  
 CAMPISTRON, 475-650.  
 CAMUS (PIERRE), 442.  
 CAPUS (ALFRED), 863.  
 CARO (E.), 794.  
 CARREL (ARMAND), 844.  
 CASTELAR, 701.  
 CASUISTRY, 358.  
 CAYLUS (M<sup>me</sup> DE) 435.  
 CÉARD, 859.  
 CÉRIZY, 312.  
 CERVANTES, 294.  
 CHAMFORT, 646.  
 CHAMPEAUX (GUILLAUME DE), 24.  
 CHANSON courtoise, 92.  
 Chanson de croisade, 90.  
 Chanson de geste, 42 à 54.  
 Chanson d'histoire, 90.  
 Chanson de toile, 90.  
 CHAPELAIN, 525.  
 CHAPELAIN (ANDRÉ LE), 56, 313, 318, 525.  
 CHARLEMAGNE, 38.  
 CHARLES D'ORLÉANS, 98.  
*Churroi de Nîmes (le)*, 41.  
 CHARRON (PIERRE), 250.  
 CHARTIER (ALAIN), 96, 180.  
 CHASTELAIN (GEORGES), 156, 181.  
 Chastiments, 75.  
 CHATEAUBRIAND, 745 à 730, 837.  
 CHAUCER, 29.  
 CHÈNEDOLLÉ, 711, 744.  
 CHÉNIER (ANDRÉ), 670 à 673, 683.  
 CHÉNIER (M.-J.), 747.  
 CHÉRUEL, 833.  
*Chevalerie (la) Vivien*, 42.  
*Chevalier (le) au barizel*, 85.  
*Chevalier au Cygne (le)*, 43.  
 CHOISY (l'Abbé DE), 453.  
 CHRESTIEN (FLORENT), 280.  
 CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES, 22, 58, 60 à 62.  
 CHRISTINE DE PISAN, 74, 96.  
*Chronique des ducs de Normandie*, 141.  
*Chronique des quatre premiers Valois*, 150.  
*Chronique de Saint-Benoît*, 141.  
*Chronique de Saint-Denis*, 142.  
*Chronique de Saint-Germain-des-Prés*, 141.  
 CHUQUET, 833.  
*Clara Gazul (Théâtre de)*, 701, 767.  
 CLARI (ROBERT DE), 146.  
 Classicism, 284.  
 Clercs de la Basoche, 127.  
 Clergy in the Middle Ages, 17.  
 — xvi century, 174.  
 CLOPINEL (JEAN), 70.  
 COEFFETEAU, 273.  
 COLERIDGE, 700.  
 COLIN MUSSET, 94.  
 Collège de France, 170.  
 COLLERET, 312, 332.  
 COLLIN D'HARLEVILLE, 706.  
 Comedy in the Middle Ages, 124 à 139.  
 — in the xvi century, 264.  
 — in the xvii century, 476-504.  
 — in the xviii century, 656-665.  
 — during the Revolution, 706.  
 — under the Empire, 708.  
 — in the xix century, 848-863.  
 Comédie-Française (Theatre of the), 504.  
 COMMINES (PHILIPPE DE), 155 à 158.  
 COMTE (AUGUSTE), 795.  
 Council of Trent, 174.  
 CONDILLAC, 612.  
 Confrères de la Passion, 115.  
*Congé d'A. de la Halle*, 125.  
 Connards (les), 128.  
 CONON DE BÉTHUNE, 93.  
*Conquête de l'Irlande*, 141.  
 CONRART (VALENTIN), 312, 318.  
*Conservateur littéraire (le)*, 745-768.  
 CONSTANT (BENJAMIN), 836.  
*Conversion de Clovis (la)*, 112.  
*Conversion de saint Paul (la)*, 109.  
 COPPÉE (FRANÇOIS), 760, 783.  
 COQUEREL (ATHANASE), 792.  
 Coqueret (Collège de), 198.  
 Coquillards, 101.  
 CORNEILLE (PIERRE), 330 à 350.  
 CORNEILLE (THOMAS), 352, 474.  
 CORROZET (GILLES), 506.  
 COTIN, 318.  
 COULANGES (les), 431.  
 COURIER (PAUL-LOUIS), 838.  
*Couronnement de Louis (le)*, 39.  
*Couronnement de Renart (le)*, 81.  
 Court (The) in the xvi century, 172.  
 — in the xvii century, 289.  
 — in the xviii century, 549.  
 Courteous love, 55 to 62, 92.  
 COUSIN (VICTOR), 793.  
 CRÉBILLON, 650.  
 CRÉTIN (GUILLAUME), 181.  
 Criticism in the xviii century, 646.  
 — in the xix century, 798 à 815.

Croisade (Cycle of La), 43.  
*Curé qui mangea des mûres* (le), 84.  
 CUREAU DE LA CHAMBRE.  
 CUREL (F. DE), 862.  
 CURTIUS, 700.  
 CUVIER, 813.  
*Cuvier* (le), 132.  
 Cycle of the New Testament, 119.  
   — of the Old Testament, 119.  
   — of the Saints, 121.  
 CYRANO DE BERGERAC, 306, 444.  
  
 DACIER (M<sup>re</sup>), 531.  
 DANCOURT, 658.  
 DANGEAU (Journal of).  
 DANTE, 30, 61, 75, 165.  
 DANTON, 681.  
 DARÈS LE PHRYGIEN, 68.  
 DAUBENTON, 612, 616.  
 DAUDET (ALPH.), 879.  
 DAUNOU, 712.  
 DAURAT, 198, 211.  
 DEFFAND (M<sup>re</sup> DU), 604.  
 DELAUNAY (M<sup>re</sup> DE STAAL), 565.  
 DELAIVIGNE (CASIMIR), 754, 780, 850.  
 DELILLE, 711.  
 DENISOT (NICOLAS), 226, 256.  
 DESCARTES, 308 à 312.  
 DESCHAMPS (ANTONY), 744.  
 DESCHAMPS (EMILE), 744, 755.  
 DESCHAMPS (EUSTACHE), 79.  
 DESHOULIÈRES (M<sup>re</sup>), 475.  
 DESMARETS DE SAINT-SORLIN, 442, 477, 530.  
 DESMAY, 518.  
 DESMAZURES, 260.  
 DESMOULINS (CAMILLE), 682.  
 DESPORTES, 302.  
 DESTOUCHES, 663.  
 DESTUTT DE TRACY, 792.  
 DICKENS, 700.  
*Dictionnaire de l'Académie*, 314.  
*Dictionnaire des Précieuses*, 320.  
 Diderot, 641, 664.  
 DIEZ, 700.  
 Disputes, 124.  
 DITS, 75, 124, 127.  
 DONNAY (MAURICE), 863.  
 DONOSO CORTÈS, 701.  
 DOON de Mayence, 42.  
 DOSTOIEVSKY, 703.  
 DOUMIC (RENÉ), 810.

*Drame d'Adam*, 109.  
 Dramas of Victor-Hugo, 770 à 774.  
 DRYDEN, 294.  
 DUBOIS, 744, 767.  
 DUCIS, 556, 655, 706, 776.  
 DUCLOS, 645.  
 DUFRESNY, 656.  
 DUMARSAIS, 612.  
 DUMAS (ALEX.), père, 774, 850, 870.  
 DUMAS (ALEX.), fils, 853.  
 DUPANLOUP (Mgr), 791.  
 DUPLESSIS-MORNAY, 271.  
 DURAND (GILLES), 280.  
 DURUY, 832.  
 DUSSAULT, 712.  
 DUVAL (ALEXANDRE), 709.  
  
 ELIOT (GEORGE), 700.  
 Eloquence during the Revolution, 677 à 682.  
 Empire (l') de Galilée, 128.  
*Encyclopédie* (l'), 608 à 613.  
*Enfances Vivien*, 42.  
 Enfants-sans-Souci, 127.  
 English Literature in the Middle Ages, 29.  
   — — in the xvi century, 178.  
   — — in the xvii century, 294.  
   — — in the xviii century, 556.  
   — — in the xix century, 699.  
 Epic Cycles, 38.  
 ÉPINAY (M<sup>re</sup> D'), 606.  
*Epîtres farcies*, 128.  
*Epoux* (l'), 108.  
 ÉRASME, 170.  
 ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN, 871.  
 ESPRIT (ABBÉ), 432.  
 ESTIENNE (HENRI), 204, 231.  
 ESTIENNE (ROBERT), 232.  
 ESTISSAC (GEOFFROY D'), 216.  
 ESTOILE (PIERRE DE L'), 276.  
*Estorie des Angles*, 141.  
*Estula*, 84.  
 ÉTIENNE, 710.  
  
 Fable in the Middle Ages, 77.  
   — in the xvi century, 506.  
   — in the xvii century, 506 à 518.  
 Fabliaux, 82 à 86.  
 FABRE (EMILE), 862.  
 FABRE (F.), 879.  
 FABRE D'ÉGLANTINE, 706.



- FAGUET (ÉMILE), 812.  
 Farce in the Middle Ages, 126 à 132.  
 FAREL (GUILLAUME), 271.  
 FARET, 312.  
 FAUCHET (CLAUDE), 234.  
 FAUJAS DE SAINT-FOND, 616.  
 FAURIEL, 800.  
 FAVRE (JULES), 843.  
 FÉLÉLTZ (DE), 712.  
*Femmes au tombeau (les Saintes)*, 108.  
 FÉNELON, 534 à 545.  
 Fête des fous, 128, 138.  
 Feudal Literature, 32 à 54.  
 FEUILLET (O.), 882.  
 FEUQUIÈRES (MARQUIS DE).  
 FÉVAL (PAUL), 871.  
 FICHTE, 700.  
 FLAUBERT (G.), 876.  
 FLÉCHIER, 398.  
*Floire et Blanchefleur*, 62.  
 FLORIAN, 668.  
 FOË (DANIEL DE), 556.  
 FONTANES, 711.  
 FONTENELLE, 560 à 662.  
 FOUQUET, 332, 509.  
 FOURIER, 794.  
 FOY (Général), 837.  
*Franc-archer de Bagnolet*, 138.  
 FRANCE (ANATOLE), 810.  
 FRATSSINOUS (Abbé DE), 789.  
 FRÉDÉGAIRE, 141.  
 FRÉDÉR C II, 583.  
 French Academy, 312.  
 FRÉRON, 647.  
 FROISSART, 95, 450 à 454.  
 Funeral Oration, 885.  
 FURETIÈRE, 444.  
 FUSTEL DE COULANGES, 831.  
 GAGE BRULÉ, 93.  
 GAMBETTA, 844.  
 GARNIER (AD.), 794.  
 GARNIER (ROBERT), 261.  
 GARNIER DE PONT-SAINT-MAXENCE, 141.  
 GASSENDI, 480.  
 GAUFREY MONMOUTH, 56.  
 GAUTIER DE COINCI, 111.  
 GAUTIER DE METZ, 75.  
 GAUTIER (THÉOPHILE), 755.  
 GEOFFRIN (M<sup>re</sup>), 604.  
 GEOFFROY, 712.  
 GEOFFROY-GAYMARD, 141.  
 GERBERT, 28.  
 GERLANDE (JEAN DE), 28.  
 German Literature in the Middle Ages, 30.  
 — — in the xvi century, 178.  
 — — in the xviii century, 557.  
 — — in the xix century, 700.  
 German (Origin of the chansons de geste), 33.  
 GERSON, 74.  
*Geste de Charlemagne*, 38.  
*Geste de Doon de Mayence*, 42.  
*Geste de Garin or de Guillaume d'Orange*, 40.  
*Gestes particulières*, 42.  
 GIBBON, 57.  
 GILBERT, 668.  
 GILLOT (JACQUES), 280.  
*Girard de Vienne*, 40.  
 GIRARDIN (ÉM. DE), 845.  
*Globe (le)*, 744, 766, 798.  
 GLOSSAIRES, 6.  
 GODEAU, 312, 318.  
 GOËTHE, 557, 700.  
 GOGOL, 702.  
 GOLDONI, 58.  
 GOMBAULT, 312, 329.  
 GOMBERVILLE, 431, 442.  
 GONCOURT (J. et E. DE), 878.  
 GOTTSCHED, 57.  
 GOURNAY (DE), 241, 312.  
 Graal (Saint), 57.  
 GRATRY, 795.  
 GRÉARD (OCT.), 806.  
 GRÉBAN (ARNOULD), 119, 121.  
 GRÉBAN (SIMON), 121.  
 GRÉGOIRE DE TOURS, 141.  
 GRESSET, 659, 668.  
 GRÉVIN (JACQUES), 256, 260, 265.  
 GRIGNAN (M<sup>re</sup> DE), 456, 462.  
 GRIMM, 606, 624.  
 GRINGOIRE, 122, 136.  
 GUARINI, 260, 294.  
 GUÉNEAU DE MONTBÉLIARD, 616.  
 GUÉROULT (GUILLAUME), 506.  
 GUIART (GUILLAUME), 146.  
 GUILHEM DE CASTRO, 294.  
 GUILLAUME IX DE POITIERS, 93.  
*Guillaume le Maréchal (Vie de)*, 141.  
 GUILLERAGUES, 453.  
 GUIMOND DE LA TOUCHE, 655.

- GUIRAUD (ALEX.), 744.  
*Guirlande de Julie*, 319.  
 GUIZOT, 825, 839.  
 GUY PATIN, 453.  
 GUY II, de Couci, 93.
- HABERT, 312.  
 HANOTAUX, 833.  
 HARDY (ALEX.), 327.  
 HARVEY, 293.  
 HAUDENT (GUILLAUME), 506.  
 HÉBERT, 683.  
 HEINE (HENRI), 700.  
 HELVÉTIUS, 606, 612.  
 HERBERAY DES ESSARTS, 64, 178.  
 HERDER, 558, 700.  
 HÉRÉDIA (DE), 759.  
 HÉROËT, 191.  
 HERVIEU (PAUL), 862.  
 History in the Middle Ages, 141 à 158.  
   — in the xvi century, 273.  
   — in the xix century, 817 à 833.  
 HOFFMANN, 712.  
 HOLBACH (D'), 606, 612.  
 Hôtel de Bourgogne (Theatre of the) 116, 327, 453, 504.  
 Hôtel de Rambouillet, 317 à 321.  
 HOUSAYE (HENRI), 833.  
*Housse partie (la)*, 85.  
 HUGO (VICTOR), 745 à 750, 843.  
 Humanism, 174.  
 HUME (DAVID), 557, 625.  
*Huon de Bordeaux*, 39.
- ISNARD, 680.  
 Italian Comedy in the xvi century, 264.  
   — — in the xvii century, 478.  
   — Literature in the Middle Ages, 30.  
   — — in the xvi century, 177.  
   — — in the xvii century, 294.  
   — — in the xviii century, 58.  
   — — in the xix century, 700.  
   — Tragedy in the xvi century, 255.
- JAMMES (FRANCIS), 762.  
 JAKEMARS GIELÉE, 79.  
 JAMYN (AMADIS), 213.  
 JANET (PAUL), 794.  
 Jansenism, 356.
- JANSÉNIUS, 356.  
 JAUCOURT (Chevalier DE), 613.  
 Jesuits, 174, 234, 364, 372.  
 JODELLE (ÉTIENNE), 255, 264.  
 JOFROY RUDEL, 93.  
 JOINVILLE, 146 à 150.  
 Jongleurs, 36, 124.  
 JOUBERT, 712.  
 JOUFFROY, 794.  
*Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris*, 154.  
 JOUY, 707.  
 Joyous Sermon in the Middle Ages, 138.  
*Jugement de Renart (le)*, 81.  
 JUVÉNAL DES URSINS, 155.
- KANT, 558.  
 KLOPSTOCK, 57.  
 KOTZEBUE, 700.
- LABBÉ (LOUISE), 192.  
 LABICHE, 855.  
 LA BOÉTIE, 238, 276.  
 LA BRUYÈRE, 411 à 420, 531.  
 LA CALPRENÈDE, 442.  
 LACÉPÈDE, 614.  
 LA CHAUSSÉE, 663.  
 LACORDAIRE, 789.  
 LACRETELLE, 712.  
 LA FAYETTE (M<sup>me</sup> DE), 431, 435, 446.  
 LA FONTAINE, 508 à 517.  
 LA GRANGE-CHANCEL, 475 à 650.  
 LA HARPE, 647, 712.  
 LA MARCHE (OLIVIER DE), 154.  
 LAMARCK, 792.  
 LAMARTINE, 738 à 744, 842.  
 LAMBERT (M<sup>me</sup> DE), 549.  
 LAMBERT LE TORT, 67.  
 LAMBIN, 170.  
 LAMENNAIS, 787.  
 LA MOTTE-HOUDARD, 531, 564.  
 LANCELOT, 356.  
 LANOUE, 655.  
 LA NOUE (FRANÇOIS DE), 273.  
 LA PÉRUSE (JEAN DE LA), 256, 260.  
 Lapidaires, 75.  
 LAPRADE (VICTOR DE), 755.  
 LARIVEY (PIERRE), 265.  
 LA ROCHEFOUCAULD, 405 à 411.  
 LAROMIGUIÈRE, 792.  
 LA TAILLE (JEAN ET JACQUES), 260, 264, 265.

- Latin Tragedy in the xvi century, 255.  
 LAVEDAN (HENRI), 863.  
 LAVISSE (ERNEST), 833.  
 LAYS, 58.  
 LABEL (JEAN), 150.  
 LEBRUN (ÉCOUCHARD), 670.  
 LÉCONTE DE LISLE, 758.  
 LEFRANC DE POMPIGNAN, 655, 670.  
 LE GLICHEZARE (HENRI), 78.  
 LEIBNITZ, 400, 557.  
 LEJEUNE (LE PÈRE), 374.  
 LE MAIRE DE BELGES, 182.  
 LEMAITRE (JULES), 810, 862.  
 LE MAITRE (ANTOINE), 355.  
 LE MAITRE DE SACY, 355.  
 LE MAITRE DE SÉRICOURT, 355.  
 LEMERCIER (NÉPOMUCÈNE), 706.  
 LEMIERRE, 655.  
 LE MOYNE (LE PÈRE), 431.  
 LE NOBLE (EUSTACHE), 518.  
 LÉOPARDI, 700.  
 LERMONTOFF, 702.  
 • LE ROY (PIERRE), 280.  
 LE SAGE, 658, 683.  
 LESPINASSE (M<sup>lle</sup> DE), 615.  
 LESSING, 557, 700.  
 L'ESTOILE (PIERRE DE), 276.  
 Letters in the xvii century, 449, 465.  
 L'HOSPITAL (MICHEL DE), 277.  
 LIARD, 795.  
 LINGENDES (le P. CLAUDE), 374.  
 Literary Circles (two), 744.  
 LITTRÉ, 795.  
 Liturgical dramas, 108.  
 LOCKE, 294.  
 Lohérains (*Geste des*), 42.  
 LOPE DE VÉGA, 294, 701.  
 LORRIS (GUILLAUME DE), 70.  
 LOTI (PIERRE), 883.  
 LOUIS XIV (Influence of), 286.  
 LOYAL SERVITEUR (LE), 273.  
 LOYSON (CH.), 767.  
 LUCE DE LANCAVAL, 707.  
 LULLE (RAYMOND), 28.  
 LUTHER, 168, 178.  
 Lyric lai, 90.  
 — Poetry in the Middle Ages, 89.  
 — — in the xviii century, 687.  
 Lyricism in the xix century 778 à 808.  
 MACHAUT (GUILLAUME DE), 95.  
 MACHIAVEL, 177.  
 MAETERLINCK (MAURICE), 762.  
 MAGNIN (CH.), 767.  
 MAGNY (OLIVIER DE), 214.  
 MAILLARD (OLIVIER), 160.  
 MAINE DE BIRAN, 792.  
 MAINE (Duchesse du), 564.  
*Mainet*, 38.  
 MAINTENON (M<sup>me</sup> DE), 432 à 434.  
 MAIRET, 327, 330.  
 MAISTRE (JOSEPH DE), 785.  
 MAISTRE (XAVIER DE), 866.  
 MALESHERBES, 682.  
 MALÉZIEU, 565.  
 MALHERBE, 296 à 300, 318.  
 MALLARMÉ (STÉPHANE), 761.  
 MALLET DU PAN, 682.  
 MALLEVILLE, 312.  
 MANUEL, 837.  
 Manuscripts in the Middle Ages, 24.  
 MANZONI, 701, 769.  
 Marais (Theatre of), 327.  
 MARAT, 683.  
 MARGUERITE D'ALENÇON OU DE NAVARRE, 184, 190, 227.  
 MARGUERITE DE NAVARRE, 275.  
 MARIE DE CHAMPAGNE, 22.  
 MARIE DE FRANCE, 68, 77.  
 MARIN (le Cavalier), 294.  
 MARIVAUX, 640, 659.  
 MARLOWE, 328.  
 MARMONTEL, 612.  
 MAROT (CLÉMENT), 183 à 190.  
 MAROT (JEAN), 183.  
 MARTHA (CONSTANT), 805.  
 MARTIGNAC (DE), 835.  
 MARTIN (HENRI), 830.  
 MASCARON, 399.  
*Massacre des Innocents (le)*, 108.  
 MASSILLON, 400.  
 MATHIEU (PIERRE), 260.  
 MATHIEU DE VENDÔME, 142.  
 MAUCROIX, 453.  
 Maugis (l'Enchanteur), 42.  
 MAUPASSANT (G. DE), 879.  
 MAURE (M<sup>me</sup> DE), 453.  
 MAURY (ABBÉ), 779.  
 MAYNARD (F.), 301, 312.  
 MAZÈRES, 850.  
 MEILHAC et HALÉVY, 858.  
 MELLIN DE SAINT-GELAIS, 190, 255.  
 Melodrama, 710, 765.

Memoirs in the xvii century, 465, 470.

MÉNAGE, 318.

MENOT, 160.

MÉRÉ (Chevalier DE), 362.

Mère folle (la), 128.

MÉRIMÉE, 767, 876.

Merlin-Merlot, 86.

MESCHINOT, 181.

MESLIER, 506.

MÉTASTASE, 558.

MEUN (JEAN DE), 70 à 74.

MICHEL (JEAN), 120.

MICHELET, 828.

Middle classes in the Middle Ages, 22.

— — in the xvi century, 174.

— — in the xvii century, 290.

MIGNET, 827.

MIKHAËL (EPHRAÏM), 762.

MILLEVOYE, 711.

MILTON, 294.

MIRABEAU, 677.

Miracle-Plays in the Middle Ages, 111 à 113.

Miracles de Notre-Dame, 112.

MOIÈRE, 480 à 503.

MOLINET, 154, 180, 181.

MOMMSEN, 700.

Moniage Renouart (le), 42.

Moniage Guillaume (le), 42.

MONOD (AD.), 792.

Monologues in the Middle Ages, 124, 137.

MONSABRÉ, 791.

MONSTRELET, 154.

MONTAIGNE, 238 à 250.

MONTALEMBERT, 341.

MONTAUSIER (le Duc DE), 319.

MONTAUSIER (M<sup>re</sup> DE), 453.

MONTCHRESTIEN (A. DE), 263.

MONTÉGUT (ÉM.), 810.

MONTMAYOR, 471.

MONTESQUIEU, 569 à 576.

MONTI, 700.

MONTLUC (BLAISE DE), 274.

MONTREUX (NICOLAS DE), 260.

Moralists in the xvii century, 429, 448.

— — in the xviii century, 642.

Moralities in the Middle Ages, 135 à 138.

MORELLET (Abbé), 612.

MORUS (THOMAS), 178.

Motet, 90.

MOTTEVILLE (M<sup>re</sup> DE), 435.

MOUSKÈS (PHILIPPE), 146.

MURET (MARC-ANTOINE), 255.

Muse française (la), 744, 746, 768.

MUSSET (A. DE), 744, 752 à 754, 769.

Mysteries in the Middle Ages, 114 à 122.

Mysteries of the Passion, 120.

NANGIS (GUILLAUME DE), 150.

Navarre (Collège de), 23.

NECKER (M<sup>re</sup> DE), 606.

NENNIUS (Chronique de), 58.

NEVERS (Duchesse DE), 454.

NEWTON, 56.

Nicolas (Jeu de Saint), 110.

NICOLE, 356.

NIEBUHR, 700.

NISARD, 804.

NIVART DE GAND, 78.

NOAILLES (Comtesse DE), 762.

NODIER (CHARLES), 744, 866.

Novels in the xvii century, 439-447.

— — in the xviii century, 638-642.

— — in the xix century, 864-884; 918-939.

Ogier le Danois, 39.

OGIER (FRANÇOIS), 330.

Opinion (The) in the xviii century, 550.

ORLÉANS (CHARLES D'), 98.

OSSIAN, 692.

OZANAM, 800.

PAILLERON, 858.

PALISSY (BERNARD), 235.

PARÉ (AMBROISE), 236.

PARIS (GASTON), 806.

Parnasse (The), 757.

PARNY, 670.

Parténopeus de Blois, 62.

PASCAL, 245, 360 à 372, 581.

PASCAL (JACQUELINE), 360.

PASQUIER (ÉTIENNE), 234.

PASSERAT (JEAN), 280.

PASTEUR, 814.

Pasteurs (les), 108.

Pastoral, 329.

Pastourelle, 90.

Pâté et la Tarte (le), 131.

Pathelin, 128.

Pathelin (le Nouveau), 131.



- Pathelin (le Testament de)*, 131.  
*Pathelin (la Vraie Farce de)*, 131.  
 PATRU (OL.), 453.  
 Pedagogy of Montaigne, 247.  
     — of Rabelais, 224.  
*Pèlerinage de Charlemagne (le)*, 38.  
 PELLETIER DU MANS, 226.  
 PELLISSON, 312, 314.  
*Perdrix (les)*, 84.  
 PERIER (CASIMIR), 839.  
 PÉRIER (M<sup>re</sup>), 362.  
 PÉRIER (M<sup>lle</sup>), 359.  
 PERRAULT (CHARLES), 447, 518.  
 PERRAULT (CLAUDE), 447.  
 PERRON (CARDINAL DU), 273, 296.  
*Petites Écoles de Port-Royal*, 355, 356.  
 PÉTRARQUE, 30, 165, 177, 192.  
 People in the Middle Ages, 22.  
 Philosophy in the xviii century, 550.  
     — of Rousseau, 633.  
     — of Voltaire, 598.  
 PICARD, 708, 850.  
 PIERRE DE SAINT-CLOUD, 78.  
 PIRON, 659.  
 PISAN (CHRISTINE DE), 96, 154.  
 PITHOU (PIERRE), 280.  
 PIXÉRECOURT (GUILBERT DE), 710.  
*Pleiad (The)*, 195 à 214.  
*Plutarch (Œuvres morales)*, 230.  
*Plutarch (Vies de)*, 230.  
 Political Writers in the xvi century, 276.  
 POMPONNE, 431.  
 PONSARD (F.), 781, 850.  
 PONSON DU TERRAIL, 871.  
 PONTMARTIN (DE), 810.  
 PONTUS DE THYARD, 210.  
 POPE, 56.  
 PORTO-RICHE (DE), 862.  
 Port-Royal, 354 à 372.  
 POUCKHINE, 702.  
 PRADON, 454, 462, 475, 524.  
 Preachers in the xix century, 789 à 792.  
 Preaching before the time of Bossuet, 374.  
 Préciosité, 319.  
 Press in the xix century, 695.  
 PRÉVOST (Abbé), 640.  
 PRÉVOST-PARADOL, 845.  
 Printing, 166.  
*Prise d'Orange (la)*, 41.  
*Prophètes du Christ (les)*, 108.  
 Profane Mysteries, 121.  
 PROUDHON, 794.  
 Provençal Influence, 92.  
 PULCI, 42, 53.  
 Quadrivium, 24.  
 Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns, 530.  
 QUESNAY, 612.  
 Quietism, 544.  
 QUINAULT, 474, 478.  
 QUINET (EDGAR), 831.  
 RABELAIS, 216 à 226.  
 RACAN, 301, 313, 318.  
 RACINE (JEAN) 449-474.  
 RACINE (LOUIS), 667.  
 RAMBOUILLET (Marquise DE), 317, 667.  
 RAMUS, 170.  
*Raoul de Cambrai*, 43.  
 RAPIN (NICOLAS), 280, 303.  
 RAVAISSON, 794.  
 RAVIGNAN (le Père DE), 791.  
 RAYNOUARD, 707.  
*Reali di Francia*, 53.  
 Realism, 694.  
*Rédemption (drama)*, 110.  
 Reformation, 168.  
 REGNARD, 656.  
 RÉGNIER (HENRI DE), 762.  
 RÉGNIER (MATHURIN), 302.  
 REID (THOMAS), 557.  
*Reine Sibille (la)*, 38.  
*Reinhart Fuchs*, 78.  
 Religion (The) in the xviii century, 552.  
 Religious Dramain the Middle Ages, 105-122.  
 RÉMUSAT (CH. DE), 767, 798, 844.  
 Renaissance, 165.  
 RENAN, 795, 810, 832.  
*Renart (Couronnement de)*, 81.  
*Renart (Jugement de)*, 81.  
*Renart (le Contrefait)*, 79, 82.  
*Renart le Nouvel*, 79.  
*Renart (Roman de)*, 77 à 82.  
*Renart teinturier*, 81.  
*Renaud de Montauban*, 42.  
 RENAUDOT (THÉOPHRASTE), 312.  
 RENÉE DE FRANCE, 186.  
 RENOUVIER, 795.  
*Résurrection de Lazare (la)*, 109.  
 RETZ (Cardinal DE), 435.  
 Rhétoriciens (Grands), 180.

- RICHARD DE LISON, 78.  
 RICHARDSON, 556.  
 RICHELIEU, 312, 313, 316, 331.  
 RICHEPIN (JEAN), 783.  
 RIMBAUD, 762.  
*Rinaldo*, 53.  
 RIVAROL, 646, 682.  
 ROANNEZ (DUC DE), 362.  
 RODENBACH, 762.  
 ROBERT DE BORON, 61.  
*Robert le Diable* (miracle), 112.  
*Robert le Diable* (roman), 62.  
 ROBESPIERRE, 682.  
*Roi Louis* (le), 39.  
*Roland* (*Chanson de*), 35, 39, 48 à 53.  
 ROLAND (M<sup>re</sup>), 683.  
 ROLLIN, 642.  
*Roman d'Alexandre*, 67.  
*Roman d'Énéas*, 69.  
*Roman de Renart*, 77 à 82.  
*Roman de Thèbes*, 69.  
*Roman de Troie*, 68.  
*Roman des Sept Sages*, 62.  
*Roman du Pet-au-Diable*, 100.  
 Roman-feuilleton, 871.  
 Romances of antiquity in the Middle Ages,  
     66 à 69.  
     — of adventure in the Middle Ages,  
     62.  
     — of the Round Table, 56.  
 Romantic Drama, 765-783.  
 Romanticism, 691, 694.  
*Romulus*, 77.  
 Rondeau, 90.  
 RONSARD, 197 à 208, 264.  
 ROSTAND, 859.  
 ROTROU, 318, 350, 477.  
 Rotruenge, 90.  
*Rou* (*Roman de*), 141.  
 ROUCHER, 667.  
 ROUGET DE LISLE, 707.  
 ROUSSEAU (JEAN-BAPTISTE), 669.  
 ROUSSEAU (JEAN-JACQUES), 620 à 635, 691.  
 ROUSSET (CAMILLE), 831.  
 ROYER-COLLARD, 793, 835.  
 Russian Literature in the XIX century, 701.  
 RUTEBEUF, 86, 94, 112.  
 RYER (DU), 351.  
 SACHS (HANS), 178.  
*Saga* (*Karlamagnus*), 53.  
 SAINT-AMANT, 305, 313.  
 Saint-Cyr, 463.  
 SAINT-CYRAN (Abbé DE), 354, 357, 372.  
 SAINTE-BEUVE, 800.  
 SAINT-ÉVREMOND, 453.  
 SAINT-LAMBERT, 667.  
 SAINT-MARC GIRARDIN, 803.  
 SAINT-PIERRE (Abbé DE), 564.  
 SAINT-SIMON, 436 à 439.  
 SAINT-SIMON, philosopher, 794.  
 SAINT-VICTOR (PAUL DE), 810.  
*Saïses* (*Chanson des*), 39, 110.  
 SAISSET, 794.  
 SALES (Saint François DE), 271.  
 SALIAT (PIERRE), 232.  
 SALLE (A. DE LA), 62.  
 Salons (The) in the XVIII century, 545, 564  
     à 565, 603 à 608.  
 Salut d'amour, 92.  
 SAMAIN (ALBERT), 761.  
 SAND (GEORGE), 880.  
 SANDEAU (J.), 882.  
 SARCEY (FRANCISQUE), 808.  
 SARDOU (V.), 857.  
 SARRAZIN, 318.  
*Satires* of BOILEAU, 522.  
*Satires* of RÉGNIER, 303.  
 Satirical Literature in the Middle Ages, 77.  
*Satyre Ménippée* (la), 278, 282.  
 SCALIGER (JULES-CÉSAR), 261.  
 SCARRON, 318, 477.  
 Sceaux (Court of), 564.  
 Scenery of the *Mysteries*, 117.  
     — in the XVI century, 328.  
 SCÈVE (MAURICE), 192.  
 SCHELANDRE (JEAN DE), 330.  
 SCHÉRIER (EDMOND), 810.  
 SCHILLER, 557.  
 SCHLEGEL, 700.  
 SCHOMBERG (Mme DE), 453.  
 Schools in the Middle Ages, 22.  
 School of Lyons, 190.  
 Sciences in the Middle Ages, 26.  
     — in the XVI century, 176.  
     — in the XVII century, 292.  
     — in the XVIII century, 554.  
     — in the XIX century, 696.  
 Scolastical philosophy, 23.  
 SCOTT (WALTER), 700.  
 SCRIBE, 848.

SABLÉ (M<sup>re</sup> DE), 434, 435, 453.

SABLIÈRE (M<sup>re</sup> DE LA), 510.

- SCUDÉRY (GÉORGES DE), 318.  
 SCUDÉRY (M<sup>lle</sup> DE), 318.  
 SCUDÉRY (Mme DE), 453.  
 SÉBONDE (RAYMOND DE), 239, 246.  
 SEDAINÉ, 664.  
 SEGRAIS, 318.  
 SÉGUIER, 313.  
 SÉNANCOUR, 728.  
 SENAULT (le P.), 374.  
*Sept Sages (Roman des)*, 62.  
 SÉRIZAT, 312.  
*Serments de Strasbourg*, 8.  
 Sermon in the Middle Ages, 158.  
 Sermons of Bossuet, 402 à 409.  
 Sermons of Bourdaloue, 421 à 425.  
 SERRE (DE), 837.  
 SERRES (OLIVIER DE), 236.  
 Serventois, 90.  
 SÉVIGNÉ (Mme DE), 319 425, à 431.  
 SÉVIGNÉ (CHARLES DE), 426, 431.  
 SEYSSSEL (CLAUDE DE), 232.  
 SÈZE (DE), 682.  
 SHAKESPEARE, 178, 257, 294, 556, 655, 700.  
*Sibile (la Reine)*, 38.  
 SIBILET (THOMAS), 193, 255.  
 SIEYÈS, 680.  
 SILVIO PELLICO, 701.  
 SIMIANE (Mme DE), 457.  
 SIMON (JULES), 794.  
 SINGLIN, 157, 372, 375.  
 Sirvente, 92.  
 SISMONDI, 712.  
 SMITH (ADAM), 557.  
 Sociétés joyeuses in the Middle Ages, 127.  
 SOMAIZE, 320.  
 Songs or cantilènes in popular Latin, 8, 3.  
 — — in Romance, 34.  
 Sorbonne, 23.  
 SOREL (ALBERT), 833.  
 SOREL (CHARLES), 442.  
 Sotie in the Middle Ages, 135.  
 Sotte chanson (la), 92.  
 SOULIÉ (FRÉDÉRIC), 87c.  
 SOUMET (ALEX.), 744.  
 SOUTHEY, 700.  
 Spanish Literature in the Middle Ages, 30.  
 — — in the xvi century, 294,  
 — — in the xvii century, 704.  
 SPENSER, 178.  
 STAËL (Mme DE), 730 à 734, 863.  
 STENDHAL, 872.  
 SUARD, 712.  
 SUE (EUGÈNE), 871.  
 SULLY (MAURICE DE), 159.  
 SULLY PRUDHOMME, 759.  
 Suppôts (les), du seigneur de la Coquille,  
 128.  
 SWIFT, 556.  
 SWINBURNE, 700.  
 Symbolism (The), 762.  
 TAINE, 795, 806, 831.  
 TASSE (LE), 117, 294.  
 TENCIN (Mme DE), 540.  
 Tençon, 92.  
 Tendre (Carte de), 475.  
 TENNYSON, 700.  
*Théâtre d'agriculture*, 236.  
 Theatre in the Middle Ages, 124, 139.  
 — in the xvi century, 255.  
 — libre, 859.  
 Theologians in the xvi century, 269 à 273.  
 THÉOPHILE DE VIAU, 305, 330.  
 THEURIET (A.), 882.  
 THIBAUT DE CHAMPAGNE, 94.  
 THIERRY (AUGUSTIN), 822.  
 THIERS, 826, 841.  
 THOMAS D'AQUIN (SAINT), 24, 28.  
 THOU (J.-A. DE), 276.  
 TIRAQUEAU, 216.  
 TIRSO DE MOLINA, 294.  
 TOCQUEVILLE (ALEXIS DE), 830.  
 TOLSTOÏ, 703.  
*Tombereau de Notre-Dame (le)*, 85.  
 TOURGUENIEV, 703.  
 TOURNEFORT, 293.  
 Tragedy in the xvii century, 327-352 ; 447-  
 475.  
 — in the xviii century, 650-696.  
 — during the Revolution, 705.  
 — under the Empire, 707.  
 Tragi-Comédie, 263, 329.  
 Translators in the xvi century, 230.  
*Tresor (de Brunetto Latini)*, 75.  
 TRISSIN (LE), 255.  
*Tristan et Yseult*, 58.  
 TRISTAN L'HERMITE, 351.  
*Trivium*, 24.  
*Troie (Roman de)*, 68.  
 Tropes, 108.  
 Troubadours, 93.  
 Trouvères, 93.  
 TURGOT, 612.

TURNÈRE (ADRIEN), 170, 267.  
TURNÈRE (ODET DE), 267.

URFÉ (HONORÉ D'), 440 à 442.

VACHEROT, 795.

VAIR (GUILLAUME DU), 252.

VALENCIENNES (HENRI DE), 146.

VANDAL (ALBERT), 833.

VATABLE, 170.

VAUGELAS, 314, 324.

VAUQUELIN DE LA FRESNAYE, 302.

VAUVENARGUES, 643.

VERGNIAUD, 68.

*Vergy (la Châteline de)*, 62.

VERHAEREN (EMILE), 762.

VERLAINE (PAUL), 763.

VEUILLOT (LOUIS), 845.

VIAU (TH. DE), voir *Théophile*.

VICO, 58.

*Vie de Saint Alexis*, 8.

*Vie de Saint Léger*, 8.

*Vie de Saint Thomas*, 141.

*Vieille qui graissa la patte au chevalier (la)*, 84.

*Vierges sages (les) et les Vierges folles*, 108.

VIGNY (A. DE), 750 à 752, 776, 867.

*Vilain Mire (le)*, 84.

VILLEDIEU (M<sup>re</sup> DE), 517.

VILLEHARDOUIN, 142 à 146.

VILLÈLE (DE), 835.

VILLEMALIN, 798.

VILLON, 100 à 104, 180.

VINCENT DE PAUL (Saint), 374.

VINET (ALEX.), 810.

VIRET (PIERRE), 271.

VITET (LOUIS), 777.

VITRY (JACQUES DE), 159.

*Vivien (Chevalerie)*, 42.

*Vivien (Enfance)*, 42.

VOITURE, 313, 318, 322.

VOLTAIRE, 578 à 604.

— (Novels of), 594.

— (Tragedies of), 652.

Voss, 557.

WACE (ROBERT), 55, 57, 141.

WALPOLE, 580.

WERNER, 700.

WIELAND, 557.

WINCKELMANN, 558.

WOLFRAM D'ESCHENBACH, 62.

WORDSWORTH, 700.

*Ysopets*, 78.

ZOLA (EM.), 879.





# Table of Contents

---

	Pages.
PREFACE . . . . .	vii
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Sources of the French language, I. Earliest monuments. . . . .	6

## PART I THE MIDDLE AGES

CHAPTER I. — General survey of the Middle Ages . . . . .	11-30
I. Main divisions of the Middle Ages, 12.—II. Principles to be observed in the study of mediæval literary works, 14.—III. The Social classes, 17. IV.—Education, The Universities, The Manuscripts, 22.—V. Arts and Sciences in the Middle Ages, 26.—VI. External influences, 28.	
CHAPTER II. — Feudal Literature . . . . .	31-54
I. Earliest Beginnings, 32.—II. Development and decadence of the chansons de geste 35.—III. The Three Epic Cycles ( <i>Geste de Charlemagne</i> , <i>Geste de Garin de Montglane</i> or <i>de Guillaume d'Orange</i> , <i>Geste de Doon de Mayence</i> ). Individual gestes, 38.—IV. <i>The Chanson de Roland</i> , 46.—V. Diffusion and influence of the chansons de geste, 53.	
CHAPTER III.—Courtly Literature . . . . .	55-65
I. The romances of the Round Table, 56.—II. Romances of adventure, 62. III. Diffusion and influence of the Romances, 63.	
CHAPTER IV.—Learned and allegorical Literatures . . . . .	65-75
I. The Romances of antiquity, 66.—II. Allegorical Poetry: <i>The Roman de la Rose</i> , 69.—III. Didactic Literature, 74.	
CHAPTER V.—Bourgeois and satirical Literature . . . . .	76-87
I. <i>Le Roman de Renart</i> , 77.—II. The Fabliaux, 82.—III. Rutebeuf, 86.	
CHAPTER VI.—Lyric Poetry . . . . .	88-100
I. The Trouveres and The Troubadours (Twelfth and Thirteenth centuries), 89.—II. Lyricism in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, 94.—III. François Villon, 100.	

	Pages.
CHAPTER VII.—Religious Drama in the Middle Ages . . . . .	105-122
I. From the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries. Liturgical Dramas and Miracle-Plays, 108.—II. The Fifteenth century: The Mysteries ( <i>Cycle of the Old Testament. Cycle of the New Testament.—Profane Mysteries</i> ), 114.	
CHAPTER VIII.—Comedy in the Middle Ages . . . . .	123-139
I. First Period: From the Thirteenth to the Fifteenth century ( <i>Jeu de la Feuillée, Jeu de Robin et Marion</i> ), 124.—II. The Fifteenth century: The Sociétés Joyeuses, 127.—III. Farces ( <i>Pathelin</i> ), 128.—IV. The Morality-Play, 132.—V. La Sotie, 135.—VI. The Monologue and the Joyous Sermon, 137.	
CHAPTER IX.—History in the Middle Ages . . . . .	140-161
I. History ( <i>Villehardouin, Joinville, Froissart, Philippe de Commines</i> ), 141.—II. Mediæval Sermons, 158.	

## SECOND PART

## THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

CHAPTER I.—General survey of the sixteenth century . . . . .	163-178
I. Dates and definitions, 164.—II. Causes of the Renaissance, 164.—III. The New literary spirit, 169.—IV. The social Classes, 172.—V. Arts and Sciences, 176.—VI. External influences, 177.	
CHAPTER II.—Clément Marot. Poetry from 1500 to 1549. . . . .	179-193
I. The Grands Rhetoriciens, 180.—II. Clément Marot, 183.—III. Marot's Contemporaries, 190.	
CHAPTER III.—The Pleiad. . . . .	194-214
I. The Manifesto of the Pleiad, 195.—II. Ronsard, 197.—III. The Disciples of Ronsard: 1° The Pleiad ( <i>Joachim du Bellay, Remi Belleau</i> ), 208; 2° Contemporaries of the Pleiad ( <i>Du Bartas, Agrippa d'Aubigné</i> ), 211.	
CHAPTER IV.—Rabelais. The Story-Writers . . . . .	215-228
I. Rabelais ( <i>Gargantua, Pantagruel</i> ), 216.—II. Other Story-Writers ( <i>Bonaventure des Périers, Marguerite de Valois</i> ), 226.	
CHAPTER V.—Translators and Scholars . . . . .	229-236
I. Jacques Amyot ( <i>Plutarch's Lives</i> ), 230.—II. Scholars, 232.—III. Scientific Writers, 235.	
CHAPTER VI.—Montaigne and the Moralists . . . . .	237-254
I. Montaigne ( <i>Essais</i> ), 239.—II. After Montaigne, 250.	
CHAPTER VII.—Drama in the sixteenth century . . . . .	255-267
I. Tragedy ( <i>Jodelle, Garnier, Montchrestien</i> ), 255.—II. Comedy ( <i>Larivey</i> ), 264.	
CHAPTER VIII.—Theologians, Historians, Politicians . . . . .	268-282
I. Calvin, 269.—II. Saint François de Sales, 271.—III. Historians and authors of memoirs ( <i>Montluc, Agrippa d'Aubigné</i> ), 273.—IV. Political Writers ( <i>La Boétie</i> ), 276.—V. La Satyre Ménippée, 280.	

## THIRD PART

## THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

CHAPTER I.—General survey of the seventeenth century. . . . .	263-294
I. Chief divisions of the seventeenth century, 284.—II. Classicism, 284.— III. The influence of Louis XIV, 286.—IV. The Public in the seven- teenth century, 289.—V. Arts and Sciences, 292.—VI. Extrinsic in- fluences, 293.	
CHAPTER II.—The Reformation of poetry . . . . .	295-306
I. Malherbe, 296.—II. Malherbe's Disciples, 300.—III. Malherbe's adver- saries ( <i>Mathurin Régnier</i> ), 301.	
CHAPTER III.—Philosophical and social influences . . . . .	307-325
I. Descartes ( <i>Le Discours de la Méthode</i> ), 308.—II. The French Academy, 312.—III. The Hôtel de Rambouillet, 317.—IV. Balzac, 321.—V. Voi- ture, 322.—VI. Vaugelas, 324.	
CHAPTER IV.—The Formation of the classical Tragedy. Corneille and his time . . . . .	326-352
I. Before Corneille, 327.—II. Corneille; Biography, 330.—History of his plays, 335; Corneille and the Aristotelian Rules, 342.—III. Corneille's Contemporaries ( <i>Rolrou</i> ...), 350.	
CHAPTER V.—Pascal and Port-Royal . . . . .	353-372
I. The Abbey of Port-Royal. Principal Jansenist Writers (Arnauld, Nicole) 354.—II. Pascal ( <i>Les Provinciales, Les Pensées</i> ), 360.—III. Influence of Port-Royal in the seventeenth century, 372.	
CHAPTER VI.—Bossuet and the Preachers . . . . .	373-402
I. Preaching before the time of Bossuet, 374.—II. Bossuet ( <i>Sermons, Oraï-     sons funèbres, Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle, Histoire des Variations</i> ...), 375.	
CHAPTER VII.—The wordly moralists.—La Rochefoucauld. La Bruyère. .	403-420
I. Predecessors and contemporaries of La Rochefoucauld, 405.—II. La Roche- foucauld ( <i>Les Maximes</i> ), 405.—III. La Bruyère ( <i>Les Caractères</i> ), 411.	
CHAPTER VIII.—Letters, Memoirs, Novels . . . . .	421-448
I. Epistolary literature, 422.—II. Letters in the seventeenth century, 423.—III. Mme de Sévigné, 425.—IV. Mme de Maintenon, 432.—V. Memoirs ( <i>Cardinal de Retz, Saint-Simon</i> ), 434.—VI. Novels ( <i>d'Urfé, La     Calprenède, Mlle de Scudéry, Mme de La Fayette</i> ), 439.	
CHAPTER IX.—Racine and Tragedy from 1660 to 1700. . . . .	449-475
I. Racine. Life, 450.— History of his Dramas, 456.— Racine and the Rules... 464.— Contemporaries and successors of Racine, 474.	

	Pages.
CHAPTER X.—Molière and the Comedy in the Seventeenth century . . . . .	476-504
I. Before Molière ( <i>Rotrou, Desmarest de Saint-Sorlin, Scarron</i> ), 477.—II. Italian Comedy in France, 478.—III. Molière, Life, 480, History of his plays, 485.—Molière, the Rules and the Public, 496.—IV. After Molière ( <i>Boursault, Baron...</i> ), 503.	
CHAPTER XI.—La Fontaine and the Fable . . . . .	505-518
I. The Fable from the Middle Ages to La Fontaine, 506.—II. La Fontaine, 508.—III. The Fable in the seventeenth century, 517.	
CHAPTER XII.—The Theory of the classic ideal.—Boileau.—The Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns . . . . .	519-532
I. Boileau ( <i>Les Satires, Les Épîtres, Le Lutrin, L'Art Poétique</i> ), 520.—II. The Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns ( <i>Cause, History, Consequences</i> ), 530.	
CHAPTER XIII.—Fénelon ( <i>Traité de l'éducation des Filles, Télémaque, Dialogues sur l'Éloquence, Lettre à l'Académie</i> ),—Fénelon and the Quietism. . . . .	533-546

## FOURTH PART

## THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

CHAPTER I.—General survey of the eighteenth century. . . . .	547-558
I. Principal dates in the eighteenth century, 548.—II. Society and opinion, 549.—III. Philosophy and Religion, 550.—IV. Literature, 554.—V. Sciences, 554.—VI. The Arts, 555.—VII. External Influences, 556.	
CHAPTER II.—Transition . . . . .	559-567
I. Fontenelle ( <i>Entretiens sur la pluralité des Mondes, Éloges des Académiciens</i> ), 560.—II. Bayle ( <i>Dictionnaire historique et philosophique</i> ), La Motte-Houdard, l'Abbé de Saint-Pierre, 563.—III. The first Salons, 564.	
CHAPTER III.—Montesquieu ( <i>Lettres persanes, Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur et de la décadence des Romains, Esprit des lois</i> ) . . . . .	568-576
CHAPTER IV.—Voltaire . . . . .	577-601
I. Biography, 578.—II. Voltaire's poetic works ( <i>Henriade, Épîtres, Satires...</i> ), 588.—III. Voltaire as an historian ( <i>Histoire de Charles XII, Siècle de Louis XIV...</i> ), 592.—IV. Philosophical Works, Novels, Miscellanies, 592.—V. Correspondence, 596.—VI. Voltaire's philosophy, 598.—Voltaire's Style, 601.	
CHAPTER V.—The Salons, The Encyclopédie, Buffon . . . . .	602-618
I. The Salons ( <i>Mme Geoffrin, Mme du Deffand, Mlle de Lespinasse</i> ), 603.—II. The Encyclopédie ( <i>D'Alembert, Diderot</i> ), 608.—III. Buffon ( <i>L'Histoire Naturelle, Le Discours sur le Style</i> ), 613.	
CHAPTER VI.—Jean-Jacques Rousseau. . . . .	619-636
I. Biography, 620.—II. Rousseau's Works ( <i>Discours, La Nouvelle Héloïse, Le Contrat social, l'Émile, Les Confessions</i> ), 626.—III. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre ( <i>Paul et Virginie</i> ), 634.	



	Pages
CHAPTER VII.—Novelists. Moralists. Critics. . . . .	637-648
I. The Novel ( <i>Le Diable boiteux</i> , and <i>Gil Blas</i> from <i>Le Sage</i> ; <i>Manon Lescaut</i> from <i>l'Abbé Prévost</i> ...), 638.—II. The Moralists ( <i>Vauvenargues</i> ), 642.—III. The Critics ( <i>La Harpe</i> ), 646.	
CHAPTER VIII.—The Theatre in the eighteenth century.—Tragedy, Comedy, Drama . . . . .	649-665
I. Tragedy ( <i>Crébillon</i> , <i>Voltaire</i> , <i>Ducis</i> ), 650.—II. Comedy. Molière's disciples ( <i>Regnard</i> , <i>Dancourt</i> , <i>Le Sage</i> ), 656.—III. Marivaux and Beaumarchais ( <i>Le Barbier de Séville</i> , <i>Le Mariage de Figaro</i> ), 659.—IV. Tearful Comedy and the bourgeois Play, 663.	
CHAPTER IX.—Didactic and Lyric poetry.—André Chénier . . . . .	666-675
I. Didactic and satiric poetry ( <i>Louis Racine</i> , <i>Florian</i> , <i>Gresset</i> , <i>Gilbert</i> ), 667.—II. Lyric poetry ( <i>J.-B. Rousseau</i> , <i>Le Franc de Pompignan</i> , <i>Parny</i> , <i>Lebrun</i> ), 669.—III. André Chénier, 670.	
CHAPTER X.—Eloquence during the Revolution . . . . .	676-683
The Constituent and Legislative Assemblies ( <i>Mirabeau</i> , <i>Maury</i> ), 676.—II. The Convention ( <i>Vergniaud</i> , <i>Danton</i> , <i>Robespierre</i> ), 680.—III. Journalists, 683.	

## FIFTH PART

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

CHAPTER I.—General survey of the nineteenth century . . . . .	685-703
I. General divisions, 686.—II. The New public, 688.—III. Writers, 689.—IV. The New Sentiments, 690.—V. Origin and definition of Romanticism, 691.—VI. Realism, 694.—VII. The Press, 695.—VIII. Arts and Sciences, 696.—IX. External influences, 699.	
CHAPTER II.—Literature during the Revolution and the Empire . . . . .	704-713
I. During the Revolution, 705.—II. Under the Consulate and the Empire, 707.	
CHAPTER III.—Authors who initiated the New Renaissance. . . . .	714-735
I. Chateaubriand ( <i>Atala</i> , <i>Le Génie du Christianisme</i> , <i>Les Martyrs</i> ), 715.—II. Mme de Staël ( <i>De la Littérature</i> , <i>De l'Allemagne</i> ...), 730.	
CHAPTER IV.—Lyric poetry in the nineteenth century . . . . .	736-763
I. The Romanticists ( <i>Lamartine</i> , <i>Victor Hugo</i> , <i>Alfred de Vigny</i> , <i>Alfred de Musset</i> ...), 738.—II. Transition ( <i>Th. Gautier</i> , <i>Baudelaire</i> , <i>Th. de Banville</i> ), 755.—III. <i>Le Parnasse</i> ( <i>Leconte de Lisle</i> , <i>J.-M. de Hérédia</i> , <i>Sully Prudhomme</i> , <i>F. Coppée</i> ), 757.—IV. Symbolism ( <i>Verlaine</i> , <i>Mallarmé</i> ), 762.	
CHAPTER V.—Romantic Drama. . . . .	764-783
I. How the romantic Drama was formed, 765.—II. The Theories: <i>La Préface de Cromwell</i> , 768.—III. Victor Hugo's Plays ( <i>Cromwell</i> , <i>Hernani</i> , <i>Ruy Blas</i> ...), 780.—IV. The Plays of Alexandre Dumas père ( <i>Henri III et sa cour</i> ), 774.—V. The Plays of Alfred de Vigny ( <i>Chatterton</i> ...), 776.—VI.	

	Pages.
Alfred de Musset ( <i>Lorenzaccio, Comédies et Proverbes</i> ), 779.—VII. Casimir Delavigne, 780.—VIII. The classical reaction: Ponsard ( <i>Lucrèce</i> ), 781.—IX. The Renaissance of versified Drama ( <i>Henri de Bornier, F. Coppée, J. Richepin</i> ), 782.	
CHAPTER VI.—The Religious and philosophical movement . . . . .	784-796
I. Religious Writers ( <i>Joseph de Maistre, Lamennais</i> ), 785.—II. Preachers ( <i>Lacordaire, de Ravignan</i> ...), 789.—III. Philosophers ( <i>Maine de Biran, Royer-Collard, V. Cousin, Jouffroy, J. Simon, A. Comte</i> ), 792.	
CHAPTER VII.—Criticism in the nineteenth century. . . . .	797-815
I. Villemain, 798.—II. Sainte-Beuve, 800.—III. Saint-Marc Girardin, 803.—IV. Nisard; University Critics ( <i>Martha, Boissier, Gréard, G. Paris</i> ), 804.—V. Taine, 806.—VI. Dramatic Criticism: Francisque Sarcey, 808.—VII. F. Brunetière, 808.—VIII. Contemporaries ( <i>Jules Lemaitre, Émile Faguet</i> ), 810.—IX. Scientific Writers ( <i>Cuvier, Brongniart, Arago, Cl. Bernard, Pasteur</i> ), 812.	
CHAPTER VIII.—History in the nineteenth century. . . . .	816-833
I. Influences, 817.—II. General development, 819.—III. Augustin Thierry ( <i>Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands, Récits des temps mérovingiens</i> ), 822.—IV. De Barante ( <i>Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne</i> ), 824.—V. Guizot ( <i>Histoire de la Civilisation, Révolution d'Angleterre</i> ), 825.—VI. Thiers ( <i>Histoire de la Révolution Française, Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire</i> ). Mignet ( <i>Marie Stuart, Charles-Quint</i> ), 826.—VII. Michelet ( <i>Histoire de France</i> ), 828.—VIII. Other Historians ( <i>H. Martin, Taine, Fustel de Coulanges, Renan, Duruy</i> ), 830.	
CHAPTER IX.—Orators and political Writers.—Journalists . . . . .	834-846
I. Parliamentary eloquence and pamphlets under the Restoration, 835.—II. Under the July Monarchy, 839.—III. From 1848 to our time, 843.—IV. Great Journalists ( <i>A. Carrel, E. de Girardin, L. Veuillot</i> ), 844.	
CHAPTER X.—Comedy in the nineteenth century. . . . .	847-863
I. Scribe ( <i>Bertrand et Raton, Le Verre d'Eau</i> ), 848.—II. Emile Augier ( <i>Le Gendre de M. Poirier, Maître Guérin</i> ), 851.—III. Alexandre Dumas fils ( <i>La Dame aux Camélias, Denise</i> ...), 853.—IV. Other Authors of Comedies ( <i>Labiche, Sardou, Meilhac et Halévy, E. Pailleron</i> ), 855.—V. Naturalism in the Drama ( <i>H. Becque</i> ...), 858.—VI. E. Rostand, 859.—VII. Contemporary Comedy, 861.	
CHAPTER XI.—The Novel in the nineteenth century . . . . .	864-898
I. The Novel between 1800 and 1825. The Precursors, 865.—II. The Historical Novel: A. de Vigny ( <i>Cinq-Mars</i> ): Victor Hugo ( <i>Notre-Dame de Paris, Les Misérables</i> ); A. Dumas père.	
SYNOPTICAL TABLES . . . . .	899-937
ALPHABETICAL INDEX. . . . .	939-950











